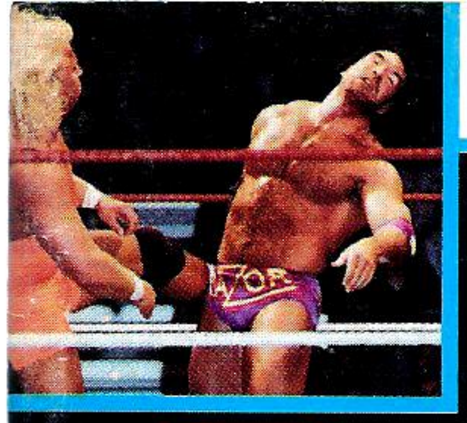

MR. PERFECT VS. RAZOR RAMON:
THE UNKNOWN SECRET THAT FUELS THEIR BRUTAL BLOOD FEUD

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WRESTLING SUPERSTARS

WCW WORLD CHAMPION

BIG VAN VADER

THE MOST FEARED MAN IN WRESTLING TODAY!

Special Section:
TAG TEAMS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

HAS JOHNNY B.BADD BOXED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER?

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WRESTLING SUPERSTARS

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STANLEY WESTON
Founder

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FAN FORUM

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ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY 11571

TICKET TO HEAVEN

What a great, original theme for the "Special Section: Wrestling's Greatest Arenas—And Their Greatest Moments!" (January 1993). I thoroughly enjoyed reading about such venerated and legendary meccas of matdom as Madison Square Garden, Kiel Auditorium, The Omni, and the Sportatorium. I'm sure all fans agree that every wrestling facility possesses its own unique and distinct personality and ambience.

I was somewhat surprised to see the Louisiana Superdome (my personal favorite) listed among the article's elite 10. Since the demise of Bill Watts' Mid-South/UWF promotion, the Superdome has ceased to be a home to wrestling.

Even more surprising was the omission in the "Greatest Moments At . . ." inset of the Superdome's most historic wrestling event of all—the inaugural Jim Crockett Sr. Memorial Cup Tag Team Tournament of April 19, 1986. With 24 tag teams comprised of wrestlers from almost every promotion (except the WWF), including Japan, 22 bouts in nearly eight hours of solid action, including a North American title match, and an NWA World title match, it was a wrestling fan's nirvana.

RICHARD EVANS
Gulfport, MS

The inaugural Jim Crockett Sr. Memorial Cup Tag Team Tournament in 1986 was one of the cards that made wrestling at the Superdome special, writes reader Richard Evans.

I found the "Special Section" in the January 1993 issue to be very interesting. I am sure when people read the history of those great arenas, they found out things they might not have known about them.

MARC PECORARO
Fair Lawn, NJ

STICKING UP FOR SCOTT

Where does Rich Sirko get off saying that Scott Putski is a "Polish punk" and a "wet-behind-the-ears, know-it-all showoff? ("Fan Forum," January 1993). Scott Putski is probably the greatest second-generation wrestler in the sport today. When Scott makes his glorious return, he will be a top contender for any title in any federation. In my opinion, Scott is a top-notch wrestler who will be a great champion.

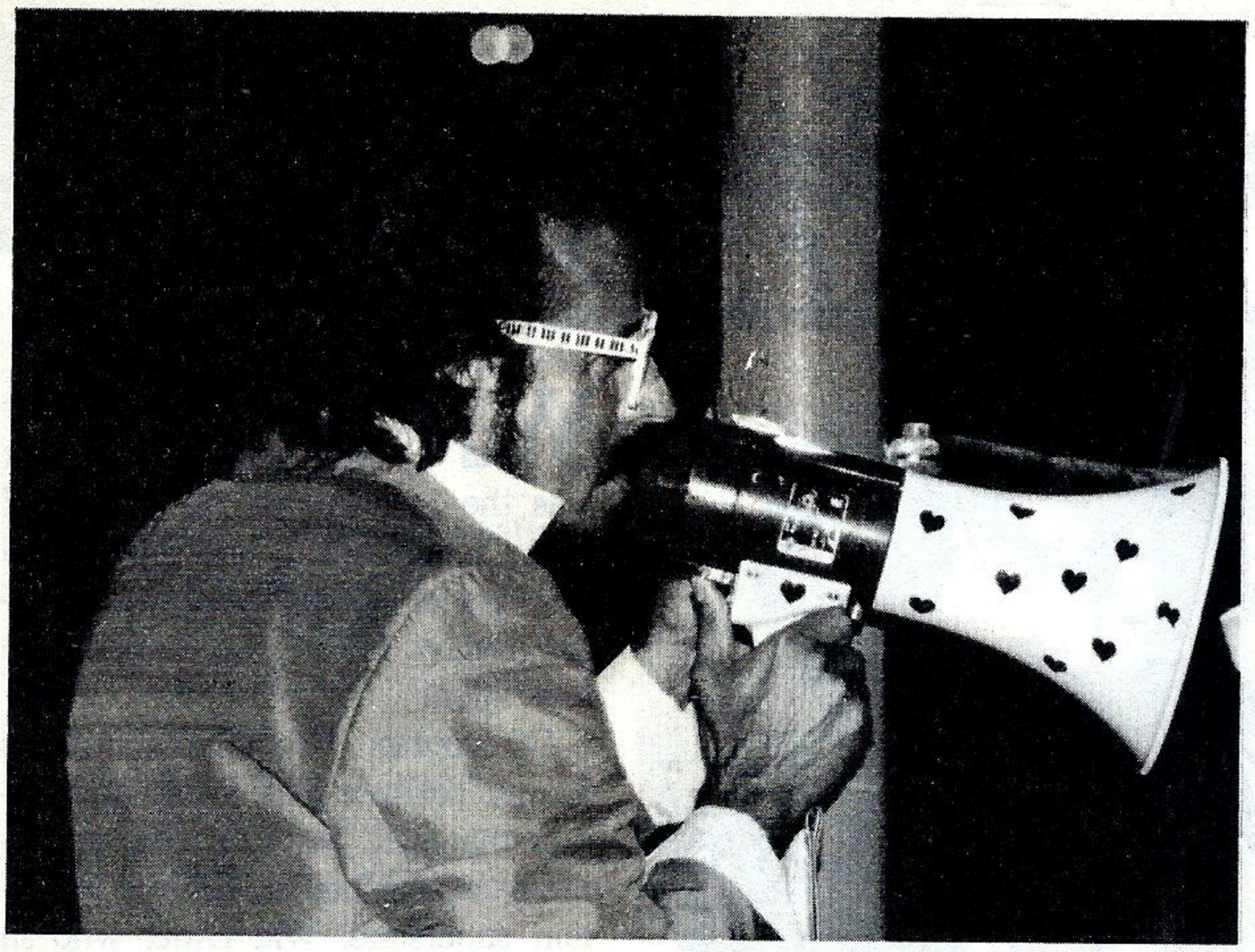
BRIAN TOMAZIEFSKI
Franklinville, NJ

CHANGE OF HART

Your "Superstar Grapevine" in the January 1993 issue reported that manager Jimmy Hart had taken sides within his own stable, accompanying The Nasty Boys to ringside for a match against World tag team champions Money Inc.

Obviously, that was all a ruse by "The Mouth Of The South," who is just about as rotten and two-faced as they come. As most fans know, Hart turned around and bought The Nasty Boys out of a title match against The Natural Disasters, inserting Money Inc. in their place. Brian Knobs and Jerry Sags attacked Hart, Ted DiBiase, and Irwin R. Schyster after the bout, but it was too late. Money Inc. had already won the title.

There should be some limits on



Jimmy Hart has maintained control of the WWF World tag team title with maneuvering within his own stable. Reader Dean Brinson has had enough of "The Mouth Of The South."

how many wrestlers a manager can have under contract at the same time. With his underhanded maneuvering, Hart has had a monopoly on the tag team title since last February. Jack Tunney, wake up and smell the coffee.

DEAN BRINSON
Hartford, CT

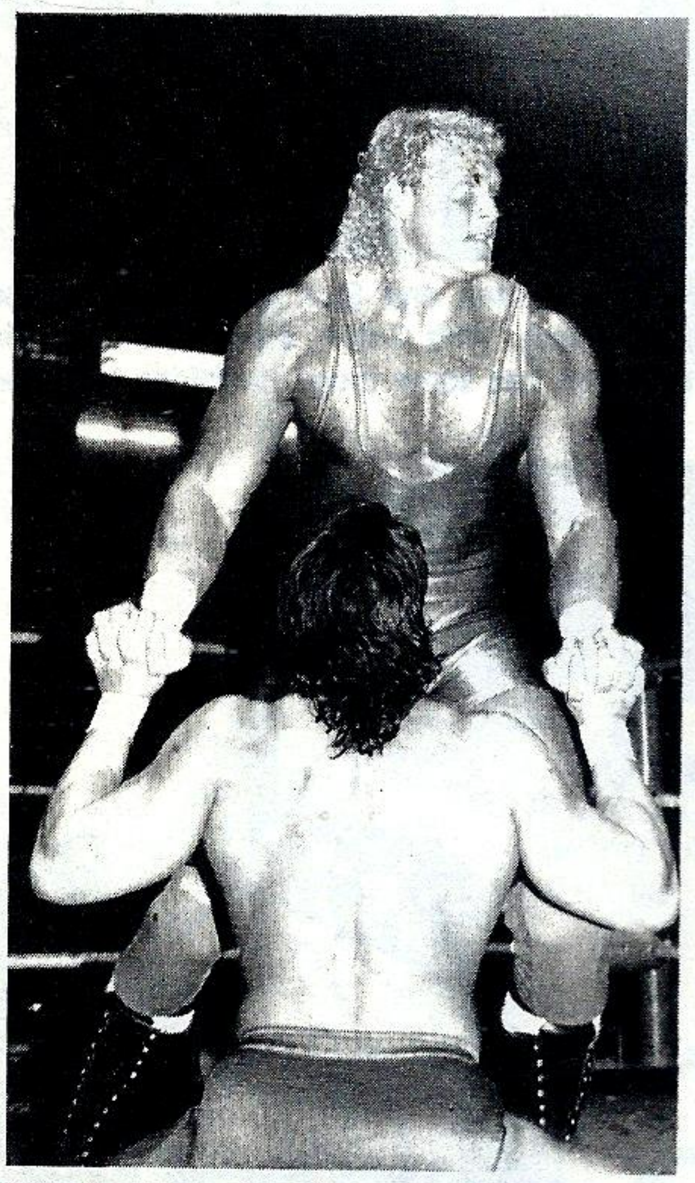
PICTURE THIS

Andy Rodriguez' story in the January 1993 issue on Sid Justice ("Have You Seen This Person?") was excellent, and incorporated one of the most innovative uses of art I've ever seen.

Justice has been gone so long that his face should be on a milk carton. He comes onto the scene, disappears, makes a comeback, disappears, and talks of returning again. His act is wearing thin and his childish behavior deserves to be made fun of.

There's only one other wrestler whose infantile mood swings rival that of Justice—and that was his one-time rival in the WWF, The Ultimate Warrior. I'm sure we'll be seeing his picture on milk cartons very soon.

JODY PERES
Hallandale, FL



Sid Justice's continuous disappearances and childish attitude justify his appearance on a milk carton, voices reader Jody Peres.

TRYIN' BRIAN

Although it was never really discussed in his interview (January 1993), I have my own theory why Brian Pillman went from fan favorite to rulebreaker. I believe Pillman was frustrated with what has happened to the light heavyweight division, and I have to admit I'm in his corner.

WCW Executive Vice President Bill Watts says he wants to give the fans what they want. Well, Mr. Watts, this fan wants to see the light heavyweight division reinstated. Watts said a tournament to determine a new light heavyweight champion would be held in early-1993. Take a look at your calendar, "Cowboy."

I don't fault "Flyin' " Brian Pillman for being upset. If you were the best in your field, and then that field didn't exist anymore, how would that make you feel?

RICKY SANTOS
San Antonio, TX

VADER'S VERSES

Big Van Vader is normally a man of few words and plenty of action. So when I saw what he had to say about regaining the WCW World title from Ron Simmons in "Superstar Quotebook" in the January 1993 issue, I started to pay very close attention to his matches.

Sure enough, on December 30, Vader pulled it off, beating the "All-American" in Baltimore. I've got a feeling that this title reign will be much longer than his last one. I'd also like to see if he follows through on the second part of his statement: "When I'm champion again, I'll look forward to your challenges."

The words of so many wrestling champions ring hollow. It would be nice to see one champion back up his boasts.

KALLIE McLAUGHLIN
Madison, WI

MO' INDIES

I realize the name of the magazine is *Wrestling Superstars*, but I wish you'd give more coverage to some of the smaller leagues. I live on the East Coast, so I see a lot of the WWA, which features men like The Spider and Boy Gone Bad, and ECW, which has great stars like The Sandman and Peaches and Johnny Hot Body.

(Continued on page 48)

SUPER STAR GRAPEVINE

The old Midnight Express was comprised of Bobby Eaton and Stan Lane (above). The Heavenly Bodies are Tom Prichard and Lane (below). With Eaton scheduled to begin competing in Smoky Mountain, manager Jim Cornette has some tough decisions to make.

WILL IT BE a reunion or a war in Smoky Mountain? That was the question on the minds of many fans when it was announced that former Midnight Express member Bobby Eaton was joining the federation.

Of course, "Beautiful" Bobby's former partner, Stan Lane, and former manager, Jim Cornette, are already established as Smoky Mountain superstars. Will Lane, who in recent months has been busy with Tom Prichard as The Heavenly Bodies, welcome Eaton back into the fold—or will Eaton's sudden appearance mean rancor within the ranks?

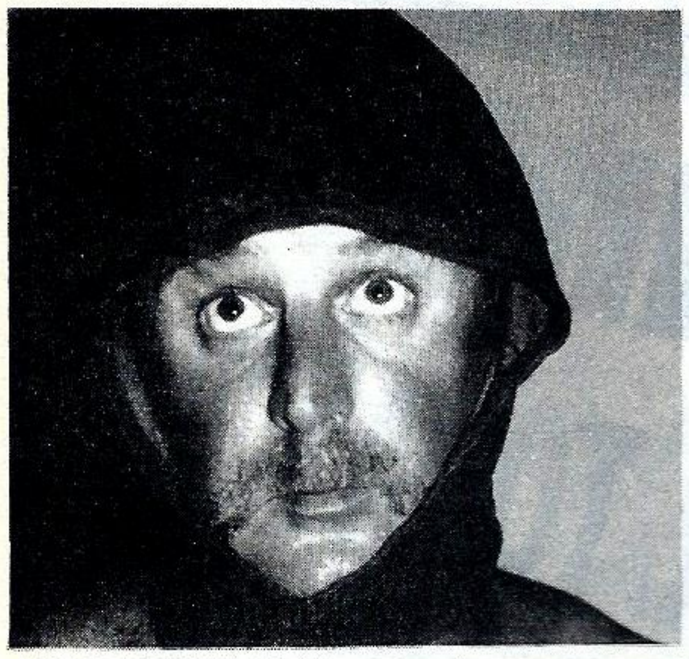
"Hey, as far as I know, Jim, Stan, and I are still tight," said Eaton, who formerly was a member of the Paul E. Dangerously-managed Dangerous Alliance. "Sure, a couple of years have passed since we all were a team, but that shouldn't really mean anything. The Midnight Express was one of the top tag teams of all-time. If Cornette wants to, we should pick up where we left off."

This could be big tag team news—to everyone expect Prichard, of course. The former USWA Southern champion has proven his worth as Lane's partner, and believes the Bodies have a lot of unfinished business with the current tag team champions, The Rock 'n' Roll Express.

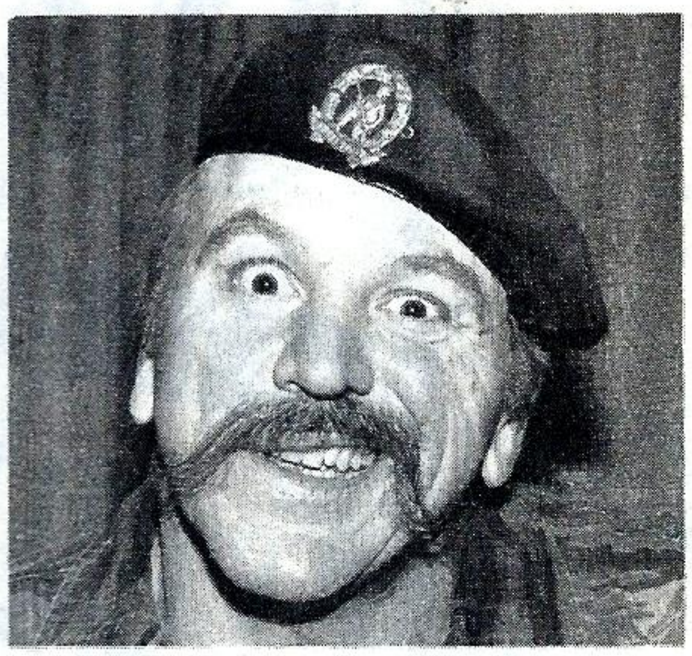
"I see no reason at all why the Bodies should bust up—even if Eaton is in the federation," said a perturbed Prichard. "We've got to get our title back from those idiots [Robert] Gibson and [Rick] Morton. Stan and I have been wrestling bet-

(Continued on page 54)

SUPER STAR QUOTEBOOK

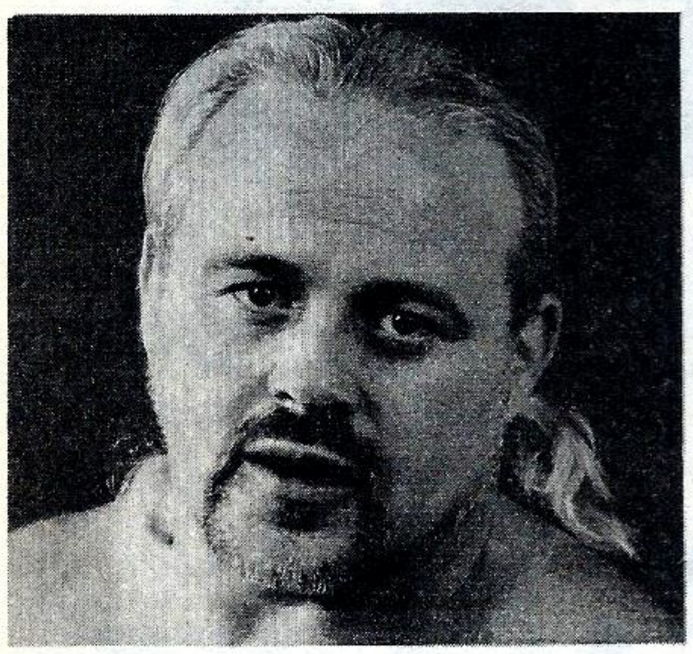


MIKE DAVIS: "I like the fans . . . no, I *love* the fans! They cheer for me now, they get up on their seats and scream and yell—just like I do! I used to get real confused and leave the ring and forget . . . forget, uh . . . oh, yeah, forget I was in a match. Now, the people spin me around and turn me back, and I always go in there and win. I may not be TV champion anymore, but I'm still . . . er, who am I? I'm happy because I'm the one and only Pinky Larsen!"



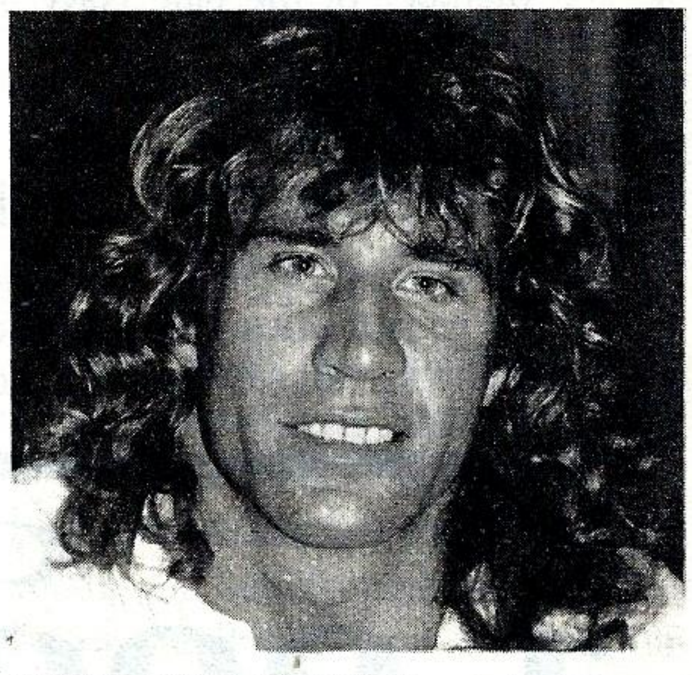
COL. DeBEERS: "I should have known that an organization with a name like Championship Wrestling USA would try to censor me. That's right. Sandy Barr and the other flag-waving imbeciles who run this federation have banned me from making political statements during wrestling cards. Is this what you people call a free country? I think it is hideous that I will no longer be allowed to set people straight on important issues. Who will now lead the sheep out there?"

BERT PRENTICE: "Where are all the stories on how I am controlling the USWA these days? My new team of Ron and Don Harris are the new USWA tag team champions. They said The Moondogs were too mean to beat, but I came up with two guys who can whip those 'Dogs any day of the week. And this is just the beginning! I've got my eye on a major superstar who will beat Jerry Lawler for the USWA title and run him to the WWF for good. Bank on it, dolts!"

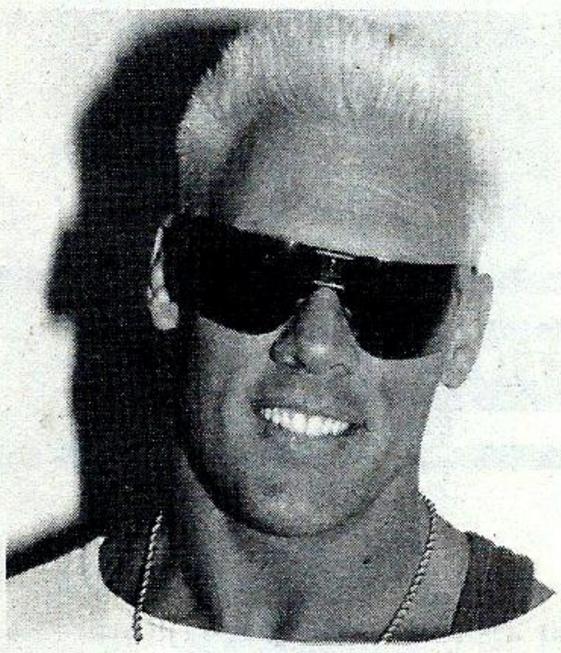


KEVIN SULLIVAN: "A lot of people are scared these days. They're saying I haven't been this evil since the mid-'80s, when I nearly destroyed all of Florida wrestling. You know what? They're right! There is no method or tactic that is too violent. When I felt the blood of Brian Lee run all over my hands, I knew I was back in top form. Smoky Mountain shall crumble under my power. I will keep on crippling until there is nobody left to cripple!"

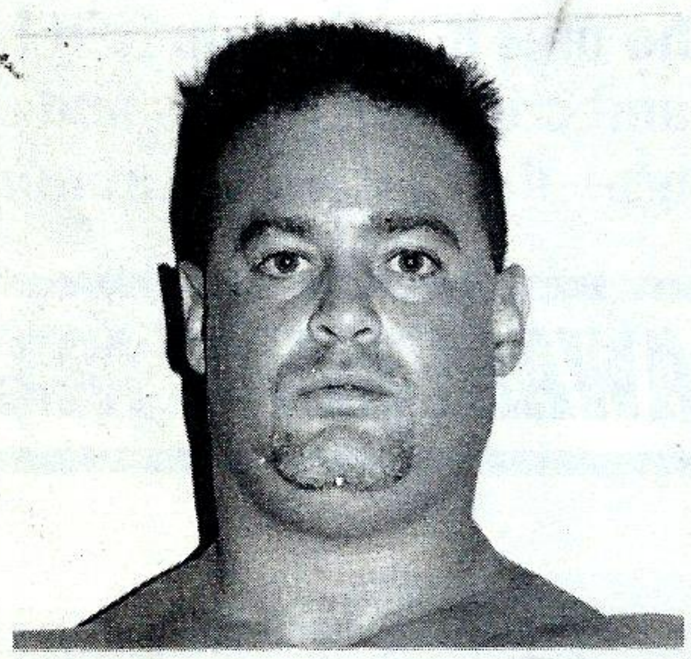
SGT. SLAUGHTER: "It does my heart good to see the Marines go into Somalia to help those needy people. The look in the eyes of those kids when our boys reach them is something you can't describe. I've done a lot of things I'm not proud of, but I feel like a new man now that the WWF has entrusted me with the position as head official. I want to keep doing good and see others do good as well. I'm proud to be an American and a former Marine!"



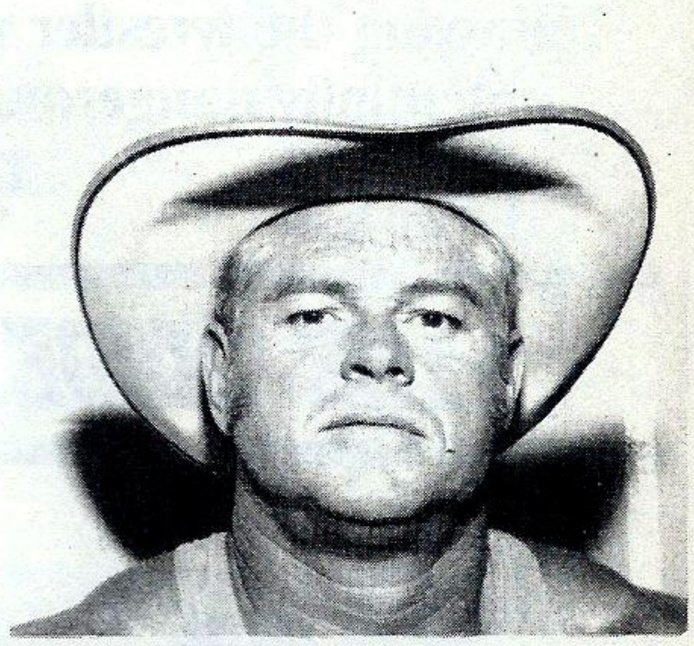
KERRY VON ERICH: "I can't tell you how important it is for pro wrestlers to stay on a regular match schedule. When I first entered the Global Wrestling Federation, I hadn't competed in many weeks—and my body really let me know it. Now, after a few weeks back, I'm in fine fighting form. Just ask Black Bart and Skandor Akbar if I'm as good as I ever was. I've put the rule-breakers on notice: I'm cleaning up this federation from top to bottom."



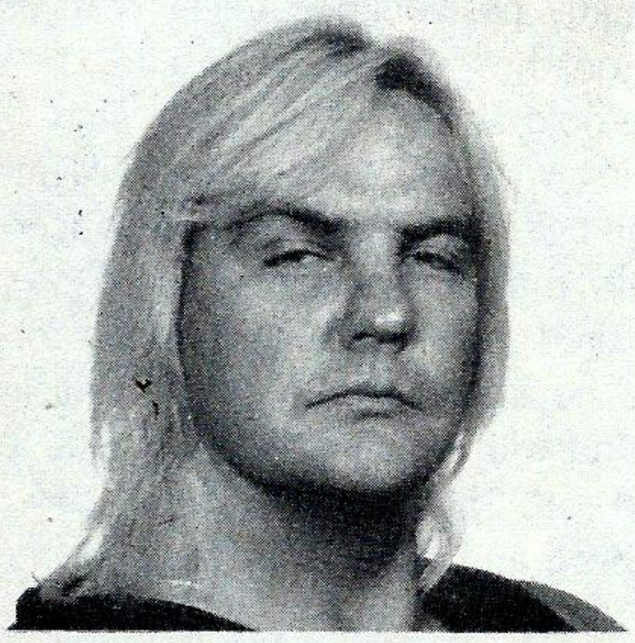
STING: "I know what people are thinking. They think that since Big Van Vader regained the World title from Ron Simmons that I'm going to chase Vader all over the place looking for a title shot. Well, I *am* going to go after Vader—in due time. What I'd like to say publicly is that I think Ron Simmons was one of the great WCW World champions. He continually conducted himself with grace, class, and dignity. He showed what being a real man is all about."



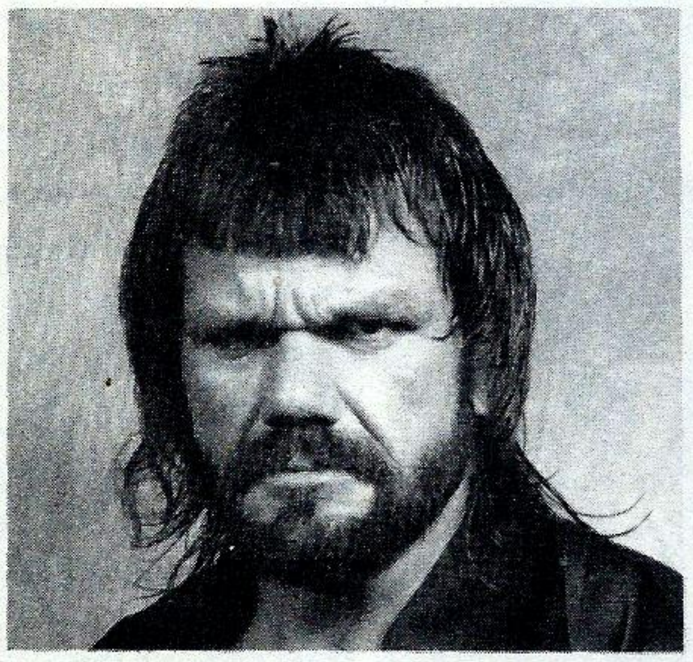
TOMMY CAIRO: "I'm happy there's an organization like ECW around, because they gave me the road back to the sport after I suffered a torn bicep a couple of years back. I've already beaten guys like Ivan Koloff and Salvatore Bellomo, and I know I'm a worthy wrestler now. But what's even more pleasing is the way the people have gotten behind me. The only true way to gain confidence in your ability is to have great fans, and that's exactly what I have."



ROBERT FULLER: "You can take that 'fan favorite' and 'rulebreaker' rhetoric and flush it in the outhouse, as far as I'm concerned. I don't care about that hooey. All I know is, Jimmy Golden and I hate Stan Lane, Tom Prichard, and Jim Cornette, and we know for a fact that those guys hate Jimmy and me. Good! Let's get in the ring and have a good ol'-fashioned donnybrook. I'll grab Lane and Prichard and pull every long hair out of their wimpy heads. Serves 'em right."



BARRY WINDHAM: "Who needs fans? I've got great new friends in Steve Austin and Brian Pillman. I've got more singles victories than I've had in years. And, best of all, I'm doing it all on my own. I don't have to share my glory with that punk Dustin Rhodes. He's got to be the most overrated clod I've ever seen. I carried our championship tag team, you know. Just look at the tapes. Turning against that oaf was the best things I've ever done."



STEVE WILLIAMS: "The WCW Championship Committee better not forget about me now that Big Van Vader is the champion. They better remember that I battled toe to toe with Ron Simmons, and I would've won the World title if not for a fast-counting referee. And I have no fear of Vader whatsoever. Remember, I won the UWF TV title from another big man in Bam Bam Bigelow. Why should I fear Vader? I can beat a man of any size."

LARRY ZBYSZKO: "I'm really starting to enjoy my new role as a color commentator. At first, I thought I was going to have trouble working with Jim Ross and Tony Schiavone, since they're so biased toward fan favorites. But after seeing their methods, I can safely say they are the two finest professionals I've ever worked with. Even though I'm savoring my position, don't rule out my return to the ring. I can still beat anybody!" □

KNOW YOUR HOLDS

Every issue, *Wrestling Superstars* will examine a different hold or maneuver, analyzing its effectiveness in the best way possible—by allowing the wrestler who uses it to explain it in his own words. These are potentially dangerous and crippling moves and should be left to the pro rings—don't try these at home!

THE "RUDE AWAKENING" NECKBREAKER

By Rick Rude

THERE'S A WARNING that comes with this column that says you shouldn't try any of the holds and maneuvers depicted here at home. Let me just reinforce that caution. Don't even *think* about attempting the "Rude awakening" on anybody under any circumstances at any time. This move is extremely dangerous, and, of course, I just love doing it.

Naturally, every one of my opponents goes into a match thinking I'll apply the "awakening" on him. That's good, because it makes them fear me, but it's also *not* good because they try mightily to avoid getting in position for the move. It takes a lot more work on my part to get a guy positioned correctly than it does to actually put on the "awakening" itself.

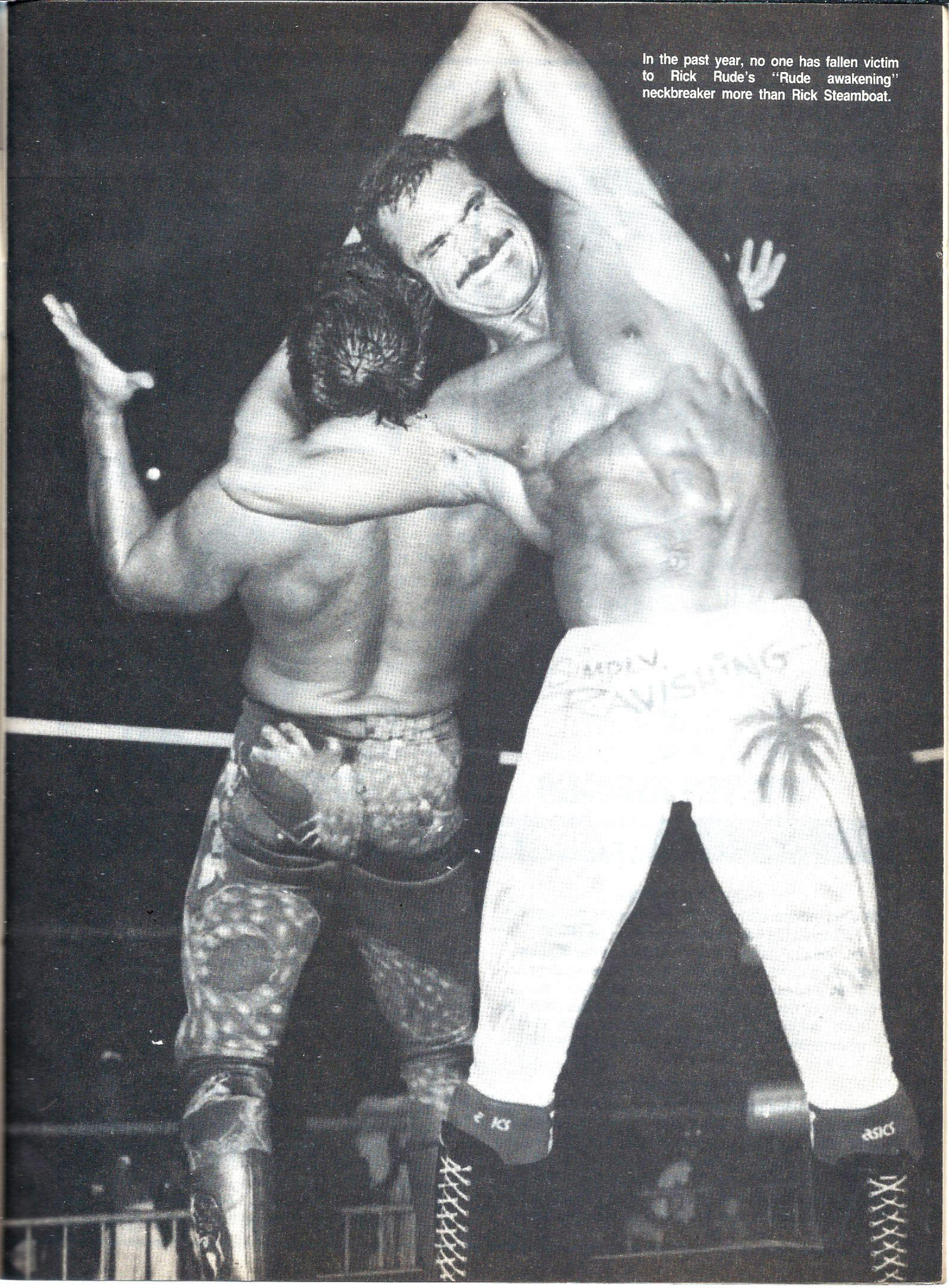
I never slap on the hold at the start of the match. I soften up the guy first with the rest of my brilliant arsenal. Of course, the better the opponent, the longer it takes, but eventually they're all victims.

When the man is tired and beaten, that's time for the "awakening." As he stands (barely) back-to-back with me, I reach around with my right arm and take a firm grip of his forehead. Then, with his head positioned between my head and shoulder, I drop to the mat—fast.

Now, I don't get hurt at all, because I land on my butt. *He* gets the brunt of the blow, a tremendous jolt that shoots through his neck and down his spine. One, two, three, it's over. Guys have told me later it's like the worst headache they've ever had, multiplied 10 times. They also say it leaves them incredibly numb everywhere else.

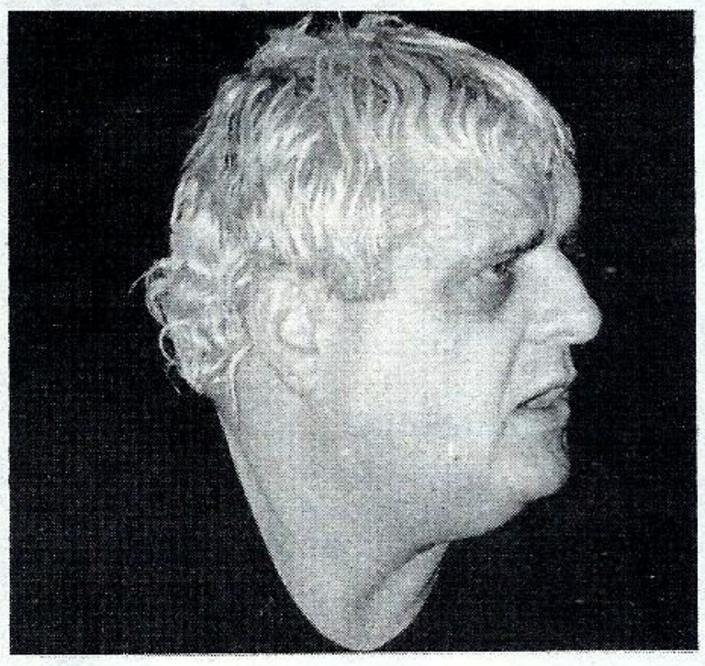
Chiropractors have explained the "Rude awakening" to me in medical terms, but you don't have to be an M.D. to know how well it works.

Just ask my idiot opponents. □


In the past year, no one has fallen victim to Rick Rude's "Rude awakening" neckbreaker more than Rick Steamboat.

SUPERSTAR DREAM MATCH

DUSTY RHODES



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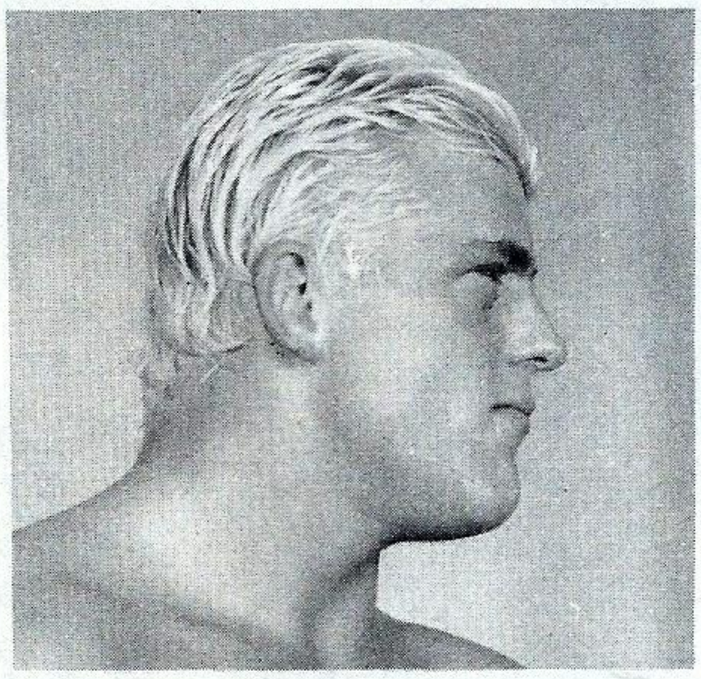


DUSTIN RHODES

VS.

BILL WATTS

&

ERIK WATTS

COMPARING THE COMBATANTS

DUSTY RHODES

Dusty Rhodes stands 6'1" and weighs 302 pounds . . . Began his pro wrestling career in 1969 . . . A native of Austin, Texas . . . One of the biggest drawing cards in this history of pro wrestling . . . Father of current WCW star Dustin Rhodes . . . Master of the flying elbowsmash and his own "bionic" elbow . . . Three-time former NWA World champion . . . Now a WCW front-office worker.

DUSTIN RHODES

Dustin Rhodes stands 6'4" and weights 254 pounds . . . Currently in his fifth year as a pro . . . Winner of the 1991 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Most Improved Wrestler award . . . The current U.S. champion . . . Formerly held the WCW World tag team title with Rick Steamboat, and later with Barry Windham . . . Favorite finisher is the flying bulldog headlock.

BILL WATTS

Bill Watts stands 6'4" and weighs 288 pounds . . . Began his pro wrestling career in 1961 . . . Known as "Cowboy" . . . The current executive vice president of WCW . . . A member of the AFL Houston Oilers . . . Among toughest wrestlers ever . . . '60s battles with Bruno Sammartino are legendary . . . Headed the original Universal Wrestling Federation in mid-'80s.

ERIK WATTS

Erik Watts stands 6'5" and weighs 262 pounds . . . The 1992 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Rookie of the Year . . . First pro match was a victory over Buddy Lee Parker . . . Learned the "STF," a stepover toehold/chinlock combination finisher, from Japanese legend Masa Chono . . . Former University of Louisville quarterback . . . Currently has a bounty on his head from an unknown source.

NEPOTISM DOMINATES WRESTLING as it does no other professional sport. Long and rich is the history of father-son, brother-cousin, and uncle-nephew combinations in the ring. While skill, fortitude, courage, and coordination ultimately decide who will succeed and who will not, there is a decided advantage to having a relative waiting near the turnbuckle with a helping hand.

However, family comes with its own set of baggage, and the help relatives can provide can be a mixed blessing. You are about to meet the Watts and the Rhodes, certainly two of the more distinguished family combinations in the country. Yet, their differing philosophies over the role of family will cause the four principles torment, anguish, and eventually bloodshed.

In each issue, *Wrestling Superstars* will present a sensational Dream Match, a spectacular battle involving the sport's greatest athletes. It's unlikely this match will ever happen anywhere—except in the pages of this magazine and the arena of your own imagination!

ROOKIE DADS

Dusty Rhodes held his newborn son in his hands and cooed, naturally out of earshot from his wrestling friends: "Son, I'm gonna see to it you get all the breaks I never got. I'm gonna make things as easy for you as they were hard for me." The baby, little Dustin, smiled into his father's big face for the first time. This brought tears to Daddy's eyes.

Around more or less the same time, another little boy was brought into the world. While the mother slept and a nurse stroked the head of two-day-old Erik Watts, Bill Watts, the baby's father, was busy breaking the jaw of Jerry Brisco in a Fort Worth wrestling ring. Watts wouldn't see his son for another week, and when he did, this is what he said to him: "Erik, I was raised to be a man and I intend to do the same with you. I love you, son, but there are life lessons a father's obligated to teach. Someday, you'll understand."

GOLDEN RULE DAYS

Dustin Rhodes grew up basking in his father's love and adoration. Dusty often chartered flights between long road trips to return home and watch his son wrestle and play football. There was little question as to what the future held for the young man.

"I think Dustin was in nursery school," remembers Dick Murdoch, Dusty's old tag team partner, "and Dusty was already talking about the day they would team up together. He was grooming that kid since day one. In a way, it was sort of cute to see them wrestling together, but also a little strange."

By age four, Dustin was leaping off turnbuckles onto his father's prominent stomach. In junior high school, he was ejected from a wrestling tournament after he dropkicked his opponent. Though he played and excelled at several sports in high school, it was clear to anyone that Dustin Rhodes was going to be a pro wrestler. He really had no choice.

IMPRESSING FATHER

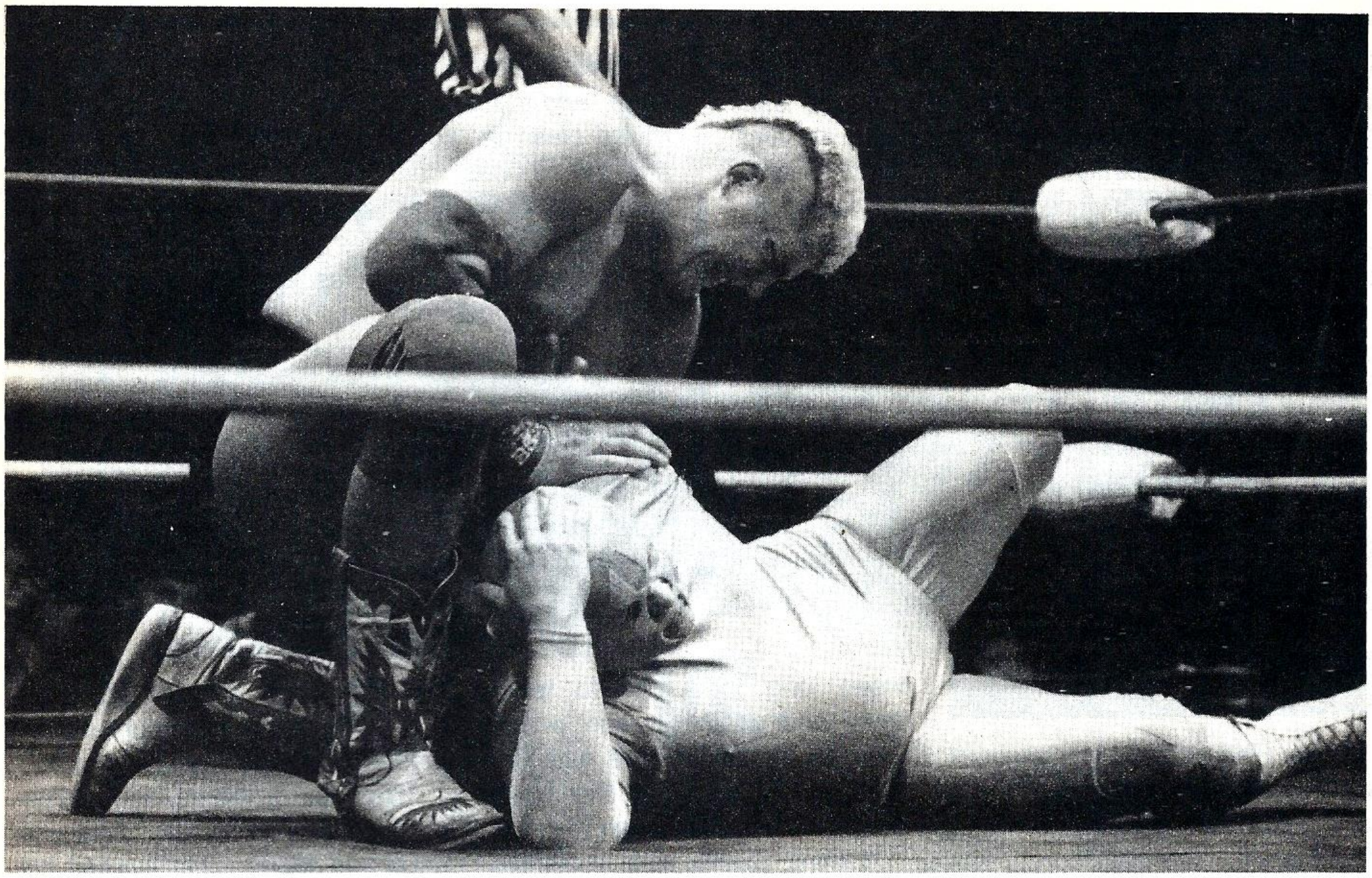
Bill Watts was true to his word. He raised his son to be a man, and real men don't hug and kiss. As a father, he was fair-minded and tough—and rarely home. Watts traveled extensively, as a wrestler and then as an executive, and Erik spent most of his teenage years trying to capture his attention when he was around.

"Erik felt a tremendous pressure to excel in sports," said one childhood friend. "He wanted his father to be proud of him and thought that was the best way to do it."

The day Erik graduated from college, he told his father he wanted to be a professional wrestler. Bill Watts shrugged his shoulders and said to his son, "Tough way to make a living, pal. I wish you luck."

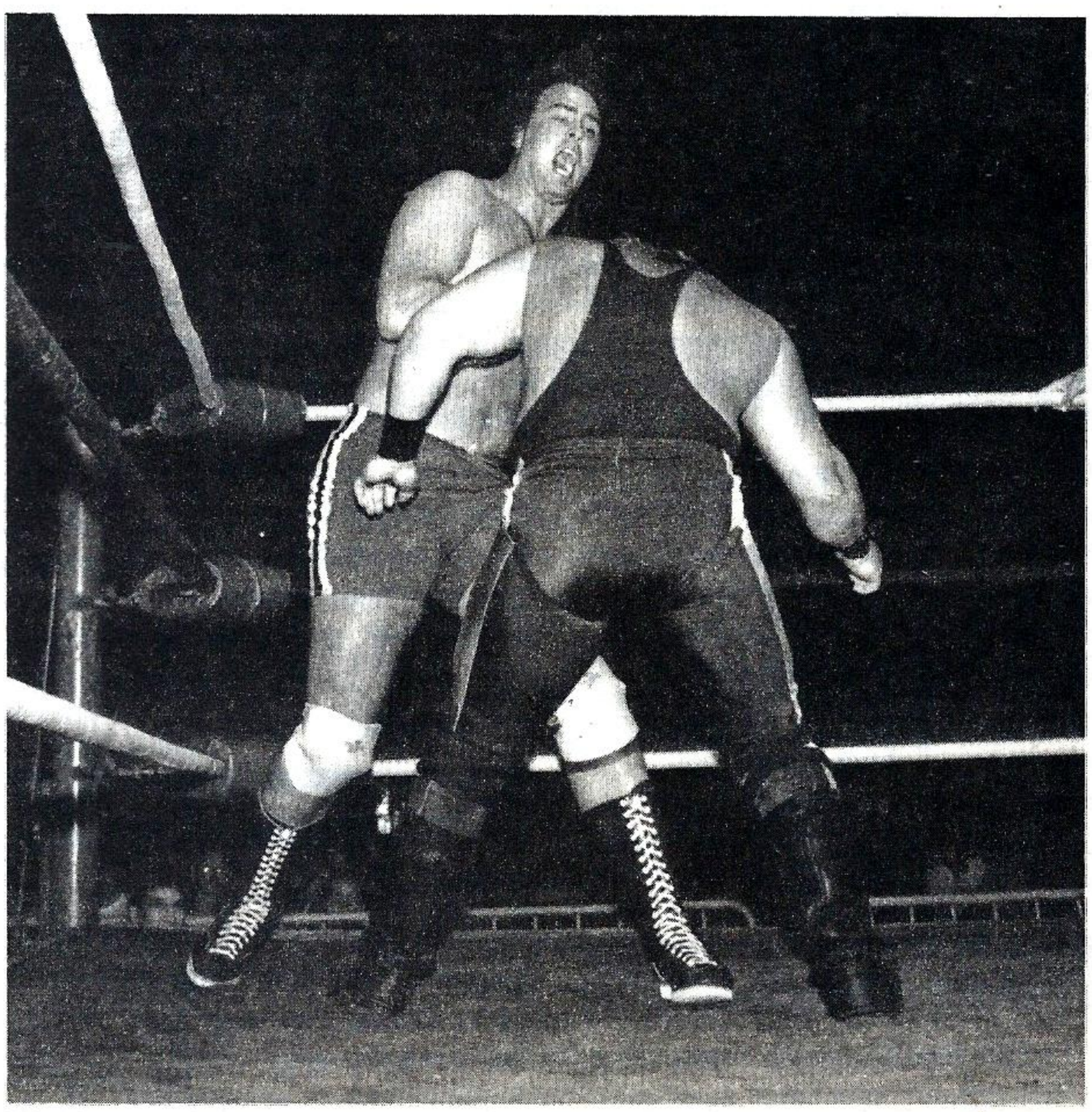
ROOKIE SONS

From day one of his professional wrestling career, Dustin Rhodes was watched, coached, guided, prodded, and encouraged by his number-one fan: his father. Dusty monitored his son's debut from ringside and accompanied him to the ring for the first three months of his career. Often Dusty intervened in the matches, using either his reputation to influence officials or his elbow to keep an interfering manager in line. Invariably, Dusty's presence brought the crowd to its feet; Dustin always remained silent while his father did his thing.



Dustin Rhodes was voted *Pro Wrestling Illustrated's* Most Improved Wrestler of the Year in 1991. It didn't make up for the fact that he didn't win the Rookie of the Year award in 1989.

Watching his own son progress through high school and collegiate ranks, Bill Watts remarked to his friends, "Erik is going to be very good someday." When his wife implored him to tell Erik that same thing, Bill declined, saying, "I don't want him to get cocky. The only way he's going to really make it is if he feels he did it by himself. Trust me, I know."



Erik Watts was *PWI's* 1992 Rookie of the Year even though he made his debut in late-August. Some thought Watts won because his father was the head of the federation.

THEY GET BETTER

Dustin proved a competent grappler, and in time tried to remove himself from under his father's considerable shadow. The name Rhodes worked magic with promoters, and Dustin soon found himself wrestling main events in Florida—but there was a definite downside to the attention. As Dustin made his way through the ranks, he felt obligated to defend his father's honor. Dusty's enemies became his—and in three decades, Dusty Rhodes had

pounded many men who wanted nothing more than to return the favor against his son.

A brief feud with Big Steel Man nearly cost Dustin his life, until one day Kendall Windham, his tag team partner (and, not incidentally, Barry's younger brother and the son of Blackjack Mulligan), offered him some friendly advice.

"You can't fight your father's wars," Kendall said. "You spend so much time trying to satisfy what you think your dad wants that you never get around to what *you* want. No matter how hard you try, you will never be Dusty Rhodes, just as I will never be Barry Windham. The sooner you learn that, the better you'll feel—and the better you'll wrestle."

Dustin found it difficult to follow his friend's advice. His father had invested everything in him and he couldn't—nor did he *want* to—just go his own way. Little did he realize how close he and his father would become in the near future.

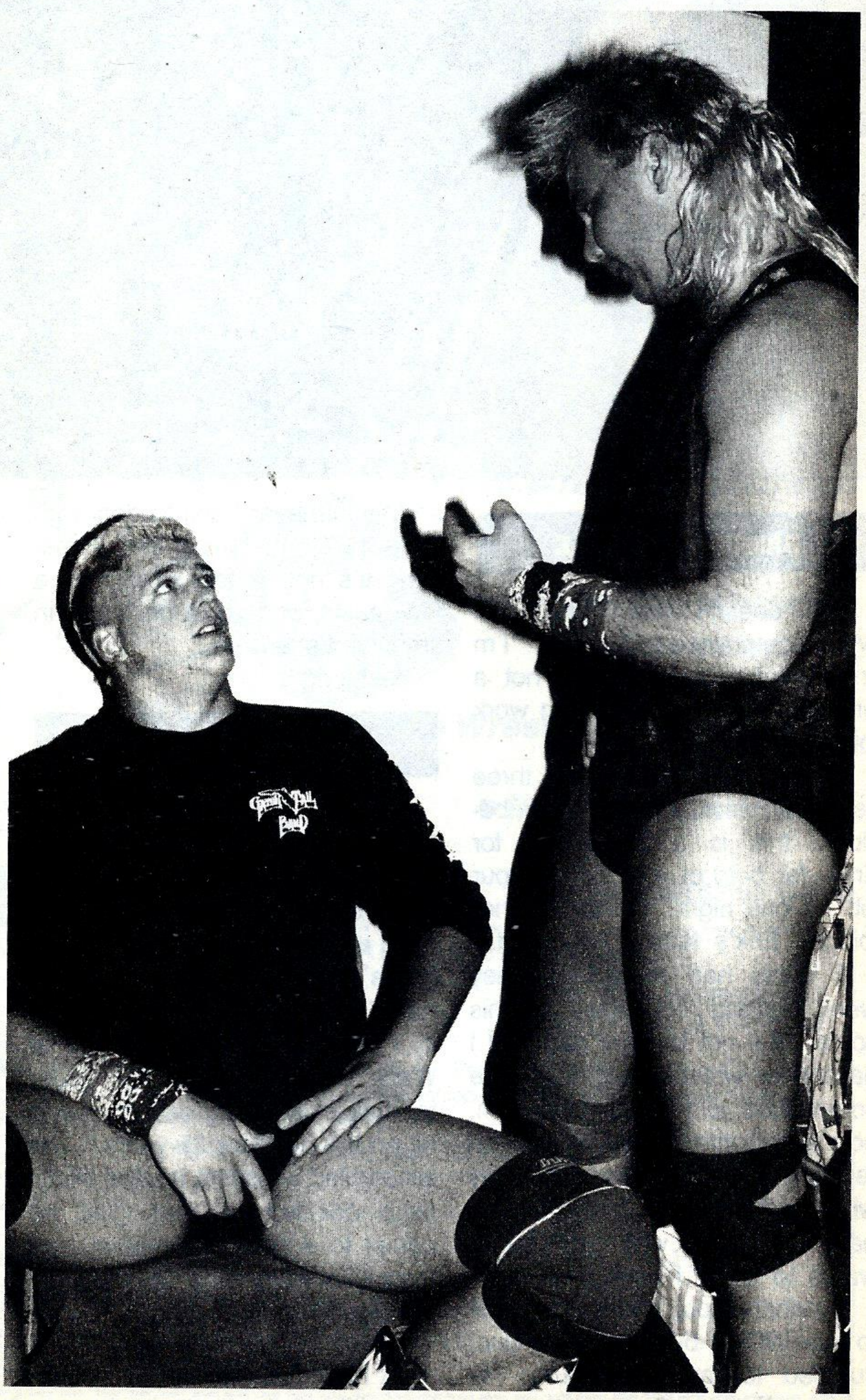
Erik Watts debuted three years after Dustin and was immediately recognized as a major talent by everyone—everyone, that is, except his father. Which isn't to say Bill Watts, now executive vice president of WCW, wasn't proud that his son captured the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* 1992 Rookie of the Year award. Inwardly, he beamed with delight. But in public statements, he distanced himself from Erik, fearful that someone might attribute Erik's success with his powerful position. It didn't matter; someone did, anyway.

WOW!

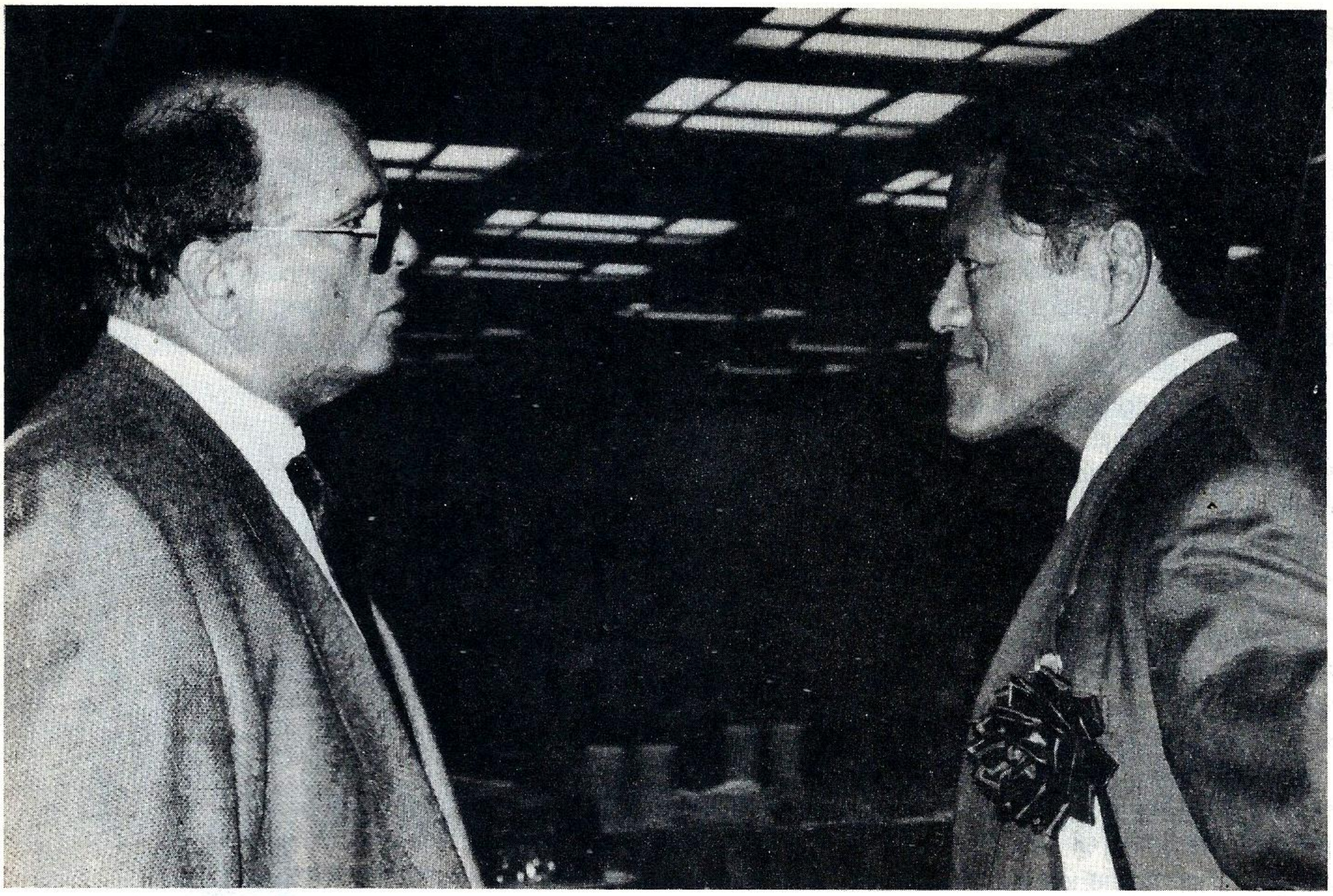
It should have been a moment to rejoice. WOW (Wrestlers of Wrestlers) is a tradition-rich organization, a combination fraternity and secret society, started in 1931 by Larry Londos, son of legendary turn-of-the-century grappler Jim Londos. WOW inducts one grappler a year in a very intense, very private ceremony. Like other organizations of its kind, there is a strict hierarchy, and membership is tightly controlled.

The families on WOW's selection committee practically define modern professional wrestling: Brisco, Von Erich, Funk, Graham, Sammartino, and Mulligan. It is the one spot where federation boundaries are meaningless. It is an organization for top wrestlers exclusively, to celebrate generations of achievement inside the ring.

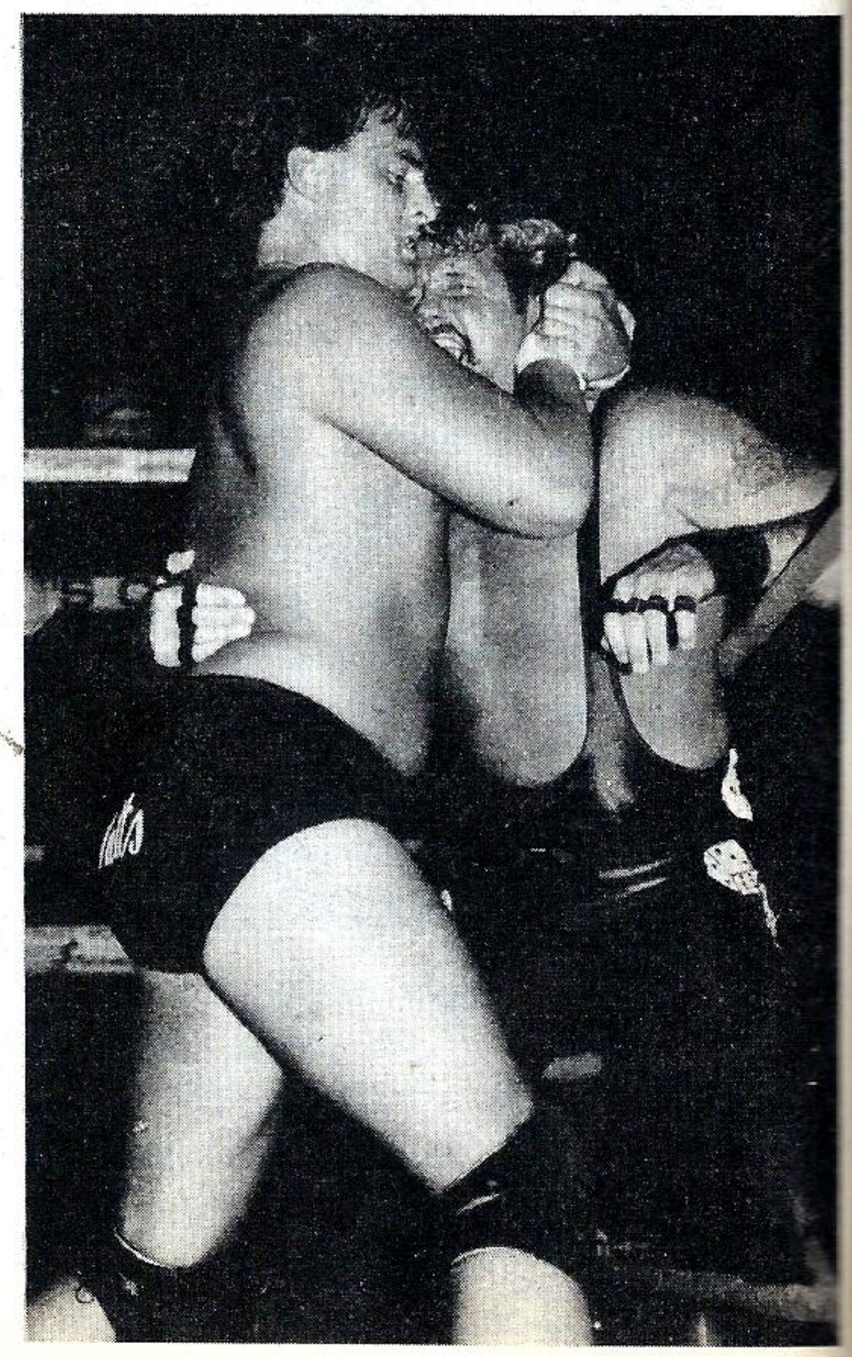
In 1992, Bill and Erik Watts were nominated for membership. After a long argument, they accepted. And then all hell broke loose.



Dustin received advice on the pitfalls of being a second-generation wrestler from Kendall Windham, son of Blackjack Mulligan and brother of Barry Windham.



Bill Watts (above) has carved a worldwide reputation as a no-nonsense man, both as a wrestler and administrator. Despite his son Erik's success (below), he intentionally withheld his praise and adulation.



BANQUET TROUBLE

"It's doesn't feel right," Bill Watts complained to his wife. "I'm an administrator now. I'm not a wrestler. A lot of these men work for me."

"You wrestled for almost three decades," she replied. "And besides, this is a big honor for Erik—for *both* of you. Forget your job for one night. You're a father tonight, Erik's father. Be proud."

If Watts had misgivings, they were nothing compared to his son's. "It's not like my dad and I have ever wrestled together," he complained to Kendall Windham, now semi-retired. "We've had no relationship inside the ring. This whole ceremony is a big joke. I have no idea why my father wants to do it. I sure don't."

Windham, too, had elected not to join WOW, but eventually succumbed to family pressure. He advised Erik to "just get through the night, and then it'll be over and you'll never have to deal with it again. Don't turn it into something it's not. A few speeches, a few toasts, and you'll be home in time for Letterman."

Yeah, right.

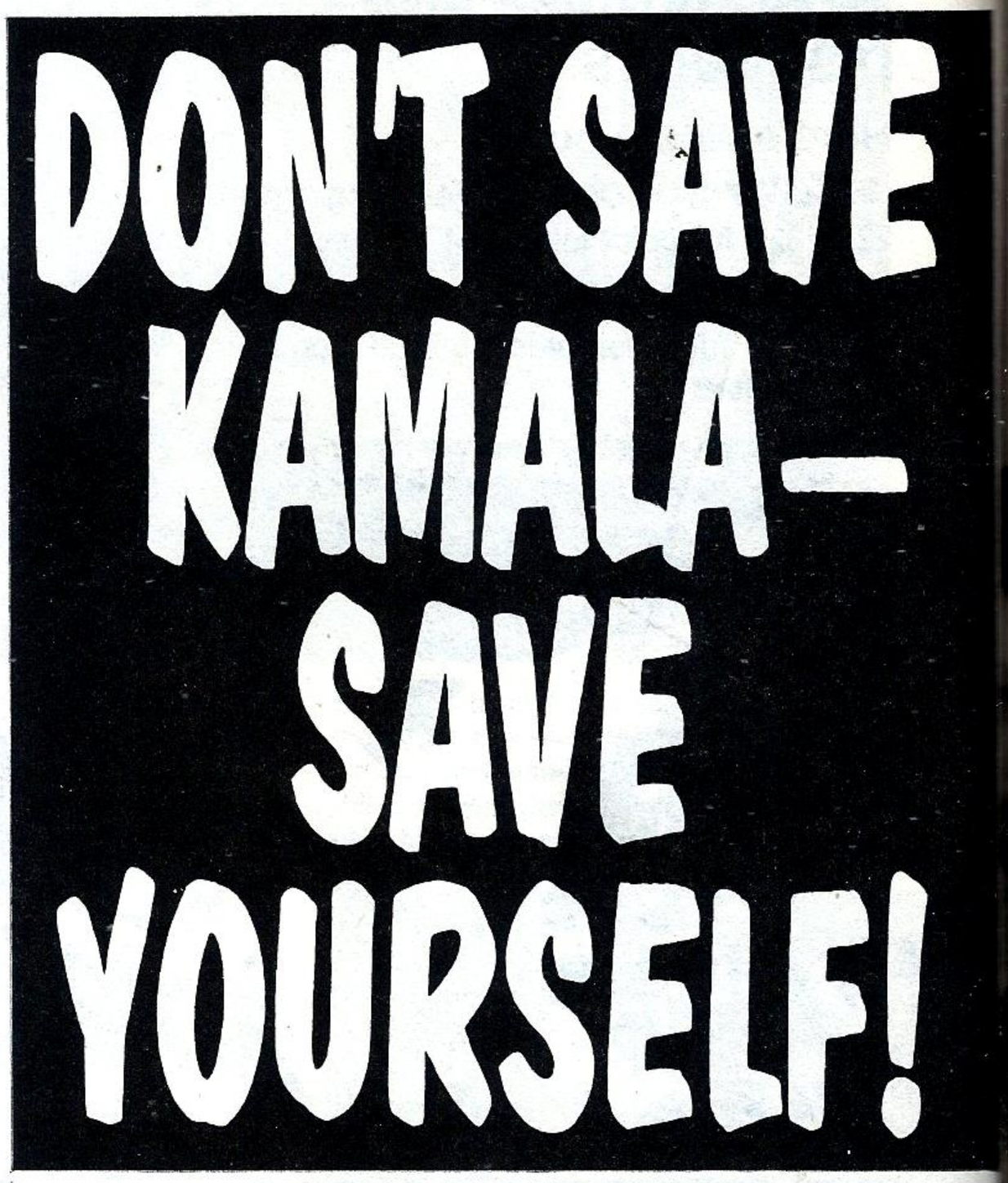
DANGER ON THE DAIS

As it turned out, Dusty and Dustin Rhodes made the speech welcoming the Watts' into WOW. Dusty's speech was laced with clichés and homilies testifying to Bill Watts' "enduring legacy of greatness," his "aggressive ring tenacity," and, in a well-taken jibe at Watts' current position, his "ability to make decisions despite being hit on the head for 25 years." The assembled wrestlers treated Watts (who decided he was glad he came) to a standing ovation, and then quieted to allow Dustin to introduce Erik.

In composing his thoughts the night before, Dustin was surprised how difficult it was to be as gra-

(Continued on page 56)

Former Managers Implore Slick:



Rev. Slick (above) is trying to do for Kamala what other managers like Gen. Skandor Akbar (right) couldn't. Slick wants to convert Kamala from a savage beast into a kinder, gentler wrestler.

Slick has been valiant in his efforts to reform Kamala, but the "Ugandan Giant's" ex-managers insist the reverend's hard work is all in vain. Kamala, they say, is a vicious jungle savage, and if Slick isn't careful, he'll end up as the main course at Kamala's next meal!

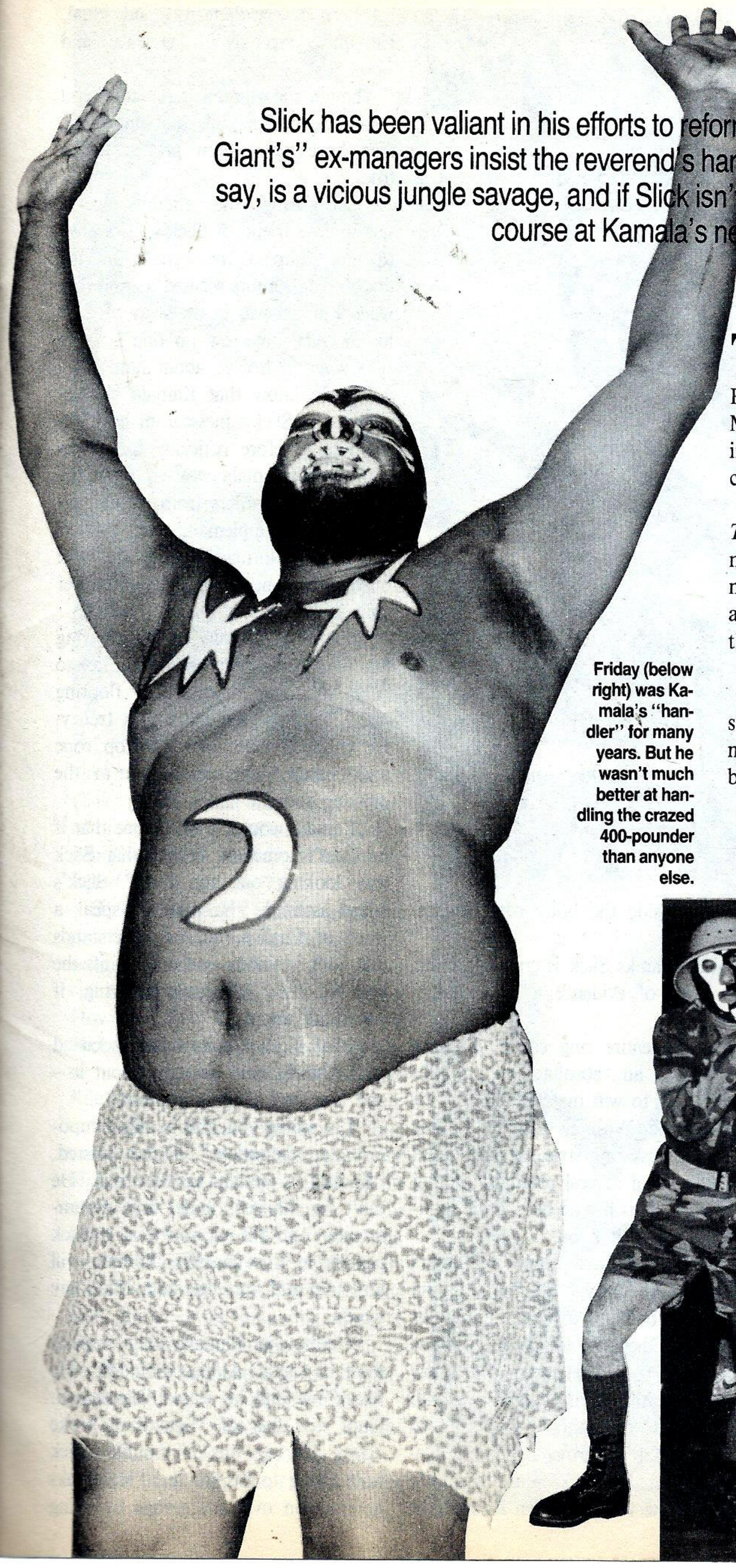
By Andy Rodriguez

THE REV. SLICK couldn't resist the chance to put his beliefs into action. Preaching every Sunday from the pulpit of Mount Ephraim Missionary Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas, was not enough. His conscience demanded that he get involved.

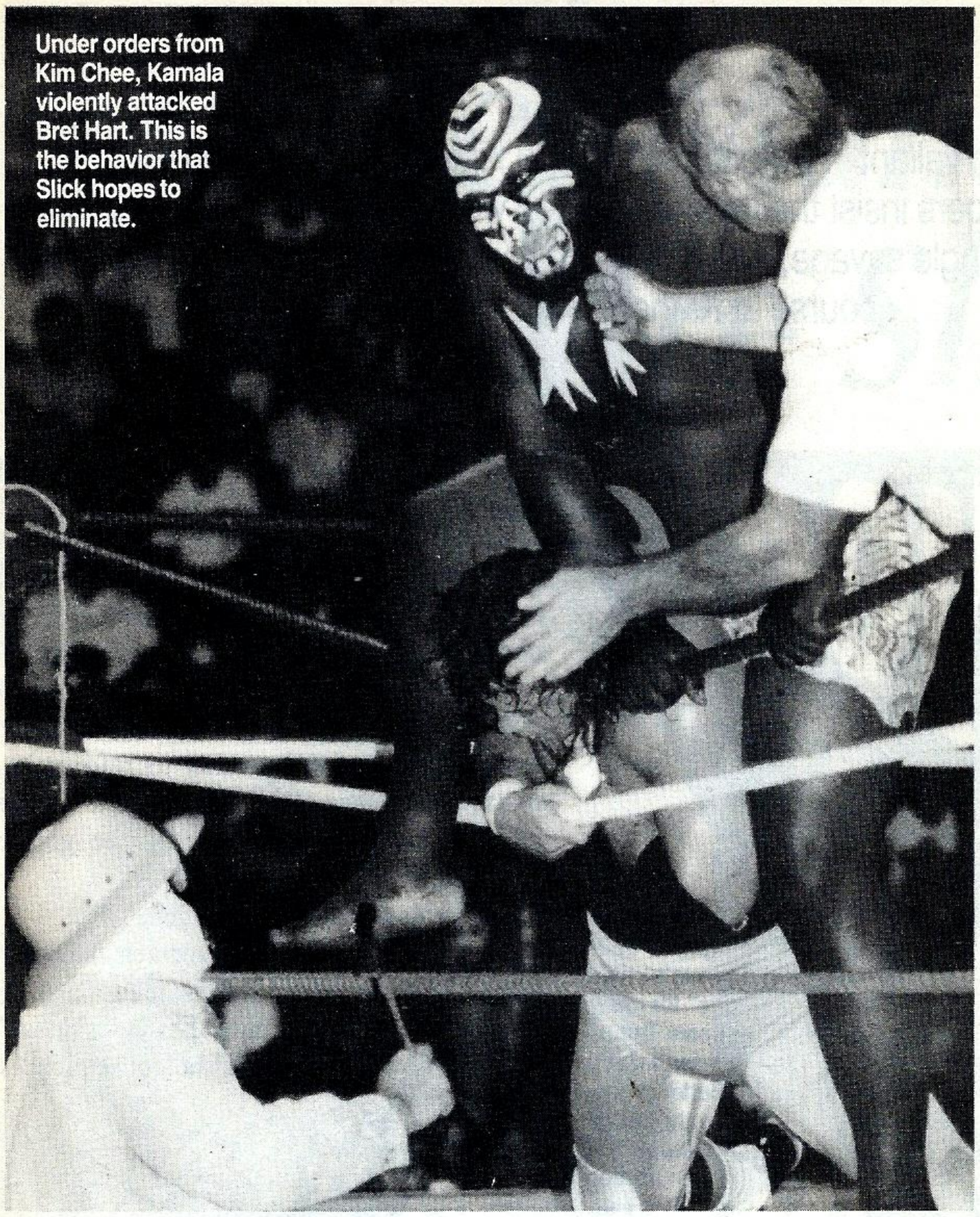
So the former manager and *WWF Prime Time* panelist assumed for himself a tremendous task: He intended to reform Kamala, the savage "Ugandan Giant." After all, the greater the challenge, the greater the reward.

And the greater the danger.

That's what Kamala's former managers say. They think Slick has made a huge mistake. They're warning that if he doesn't bail out now, he'll suffer the consequences.



Friday (below right) was Kamala's "handler" for many years. But he wasn't much better at handling the crazed 400-pounder than anyone else.



Under orders from Kim Chee, Kamala violently attacked Bret Hart. This is the behavior that Slick hopes to eliminate.

"Kamala is a savage beast," exhorts Gen. Skandor Akbar, who has managed the Ugandan in several federations. "You can control him to an extent, but you can't change him. He is what he is: a wild animal."

Other ex-managers agree with Akbar. Many of them couldn't even control Kamala, let alone manage his affairs.

Slick, though, is different from the rest. He isn't trying to subjugate Kamala. He is doing something none of his other managers have ever done. He is treating Kamala like a human being.

The preacher sees the dignity inherent in every person. He looks at Kamala and sees not an uncontrollable wildman, but a man who has been mistreated ever since he stepped into a wrestling ring, and probably for most of his life. Slick thinks he can save Kamala by bringing out the person trapped inside the body of a savage warrior.

Akbar thinks Slick is crazy—and he has a lot of evidence to support his view.

For his entire ring career, Kamala has been an absolute terror. He doesn't try to win matches, he tries to hurt people. With his mighty splashes and relentless ring style, he has ended the careers of several promising young grapplers. This has all been while managers spurred him on.

Then there have been the rumors that before Kamala entered wrestling he was a bodyguard for the infamous Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Worse yet, many people will swear they know for a fact that Kamala is a cannibal.

"I can't verify those rumors," said Friday, another former handler of Kamala, "but they make sense to me. In all the time I have known Kamala, he has been a very dangerous individual. He only responds to violence and force."

Though the rumors make for good reading, counter Slick's supporters, they have nevèr been proven to be true.

"Considering the circumstances," said a close friend of Slick's, "we have to give Kamala the benefit of the doubt. The rumors seemed to ring true when Kamala was in the sway of guys like Akbar, but now no one is quite sure *what* to believe about him."

We do know that Kamala has responded to Slick's message of hope. In the weeks before officially joined up with Slick, Kamala was visibly reluctant to follow orders from his manager, Harvey Wippleman, and handler, Kim Chee. Normally, he would have obediently gone along with whatever they said.

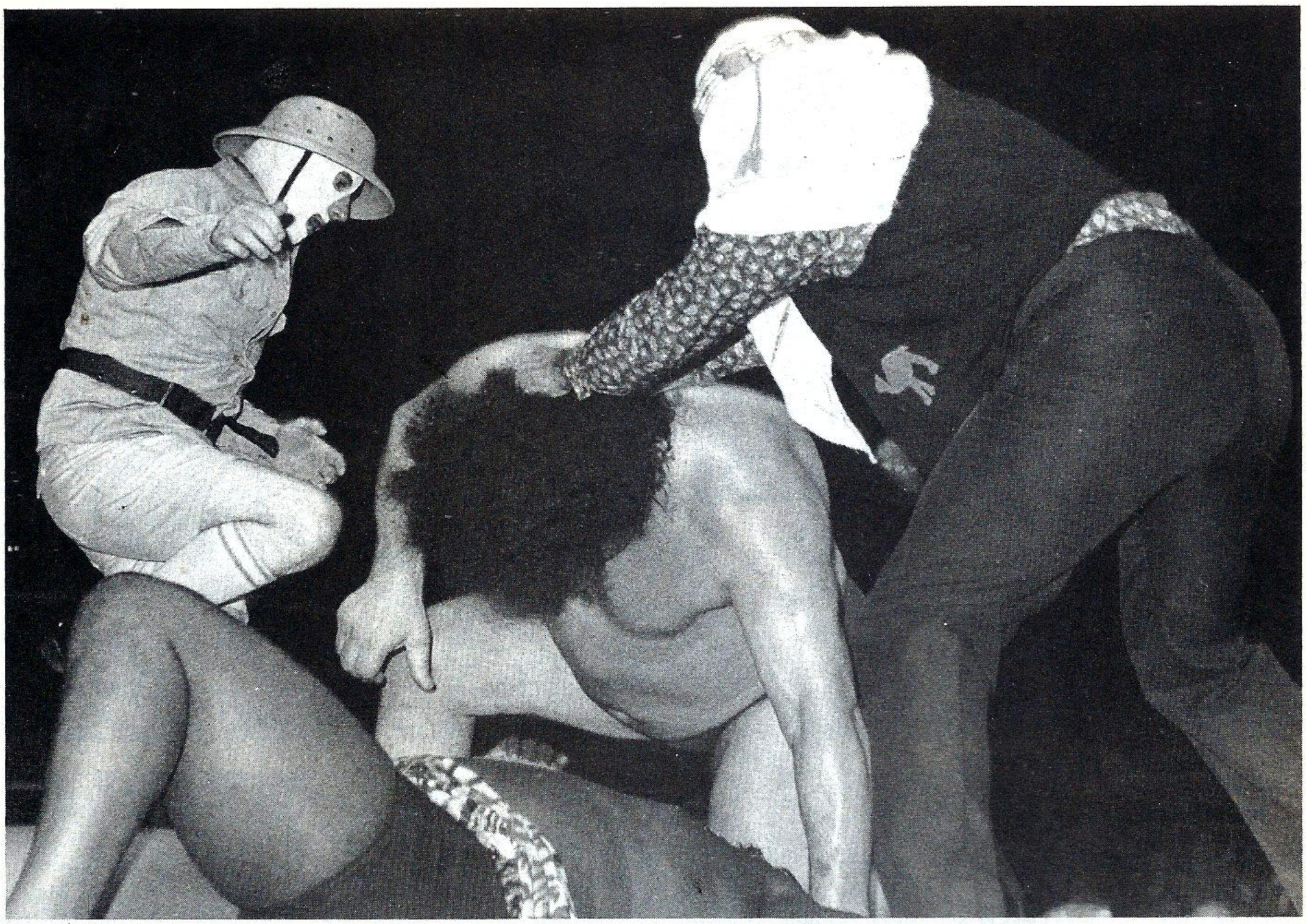
When Slick actually entered the ring and told Wippleman and Kim Chee to back off, Chee responded by flooring him. That sent Kamala into a frenzy. He chopped Chee over the top rope and chased Wippleman back to the dressing room.

"Kamala wouldn't have done that if he didn't somehow believe that Slick was looking out for him," Slick's friend asserted. "He may not speak a word of English, but he understands that Slick is sincere and only wants the best for him. It's really amazing, if you think about it."

Akbar, Friday, and others associated with Kamala have thought about it—and they *still* are not impressed.

"I'm telling you, this is only temporary, an aberration," Akbar insisted. "Kamala is rotten to the core. He can't be changed, under any circumstances. And I'll tell you this: If Slick persists in this charade, Kamala will hurt him and hurt him bad. Mark my words.

"Ultimately, Kamala only respects those he fears," Akbar continued. "He feared me and he feared Wippleman. Once that fear of Wippleman broke down, Harvey was in trouble. Slick isn't trying to inspire fear. He thinks he can win over the savage by being



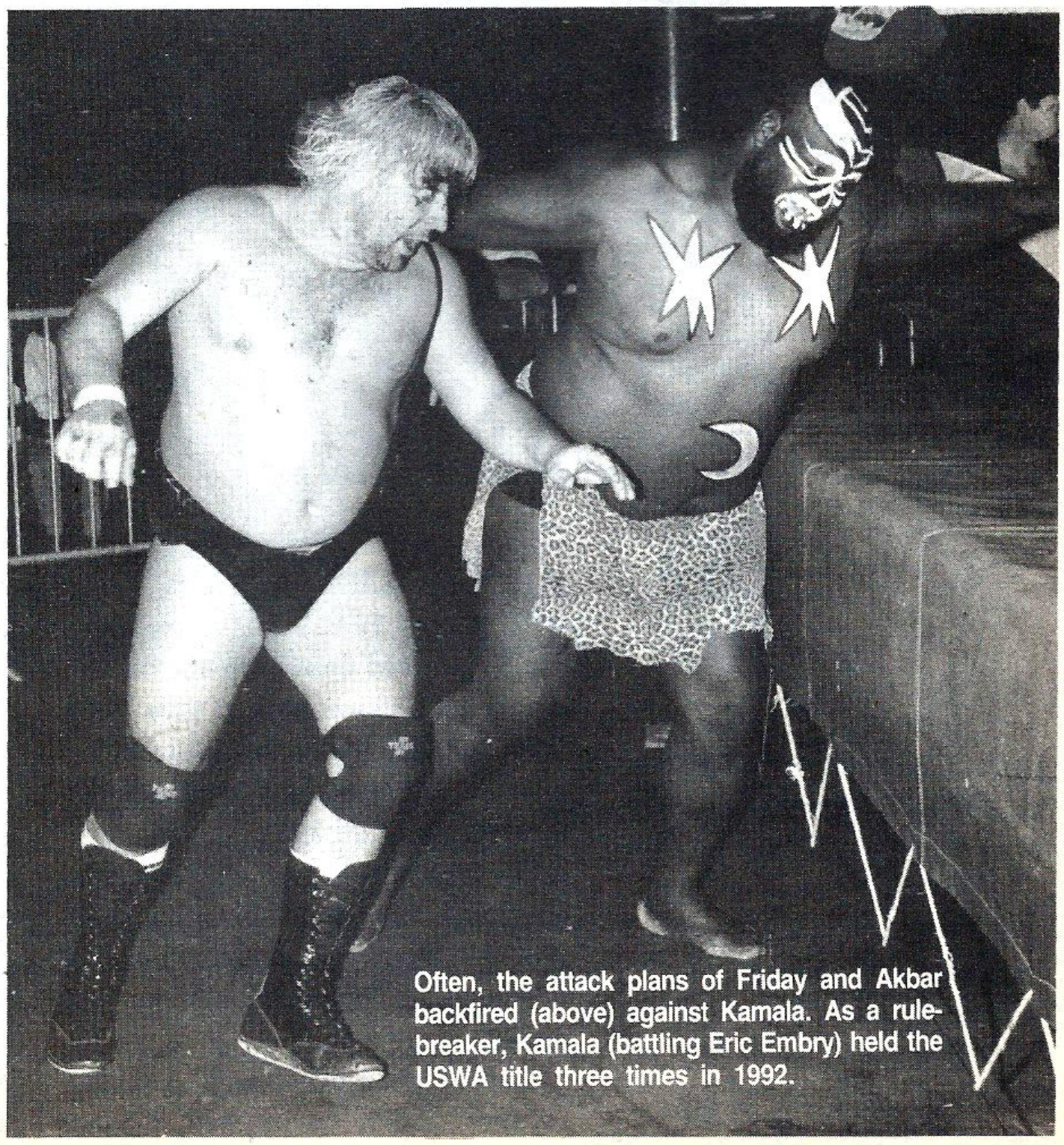
kind to him. Kamala has no fear of Slick, meaning that it's only a matter of time before he attacks. Then Slick is going to say to himself, *What in the world was I thinking?"*

Slick's supporters acknowledge the peril that is inherent in attempting to reform someone who has been a vicious rulebreaker for so many years. However, they also say that even if Slick realized he had made a mistake, he would keep trying to change Kamala.

"Slick won't back out—ever," said another friend, a regular attendee of Slick's Sunday sermons. "This is his evangelical mission. He knows in his heart that Kamala, with the right help, can turn his life around. He's determined to prove to the world that any man can be saved, no matter what the circumstances. He's taking the risk of bodily harm to make a powerful statement. You have to admire him."

The former managers of Kamala don't admire Slick; they pity him.

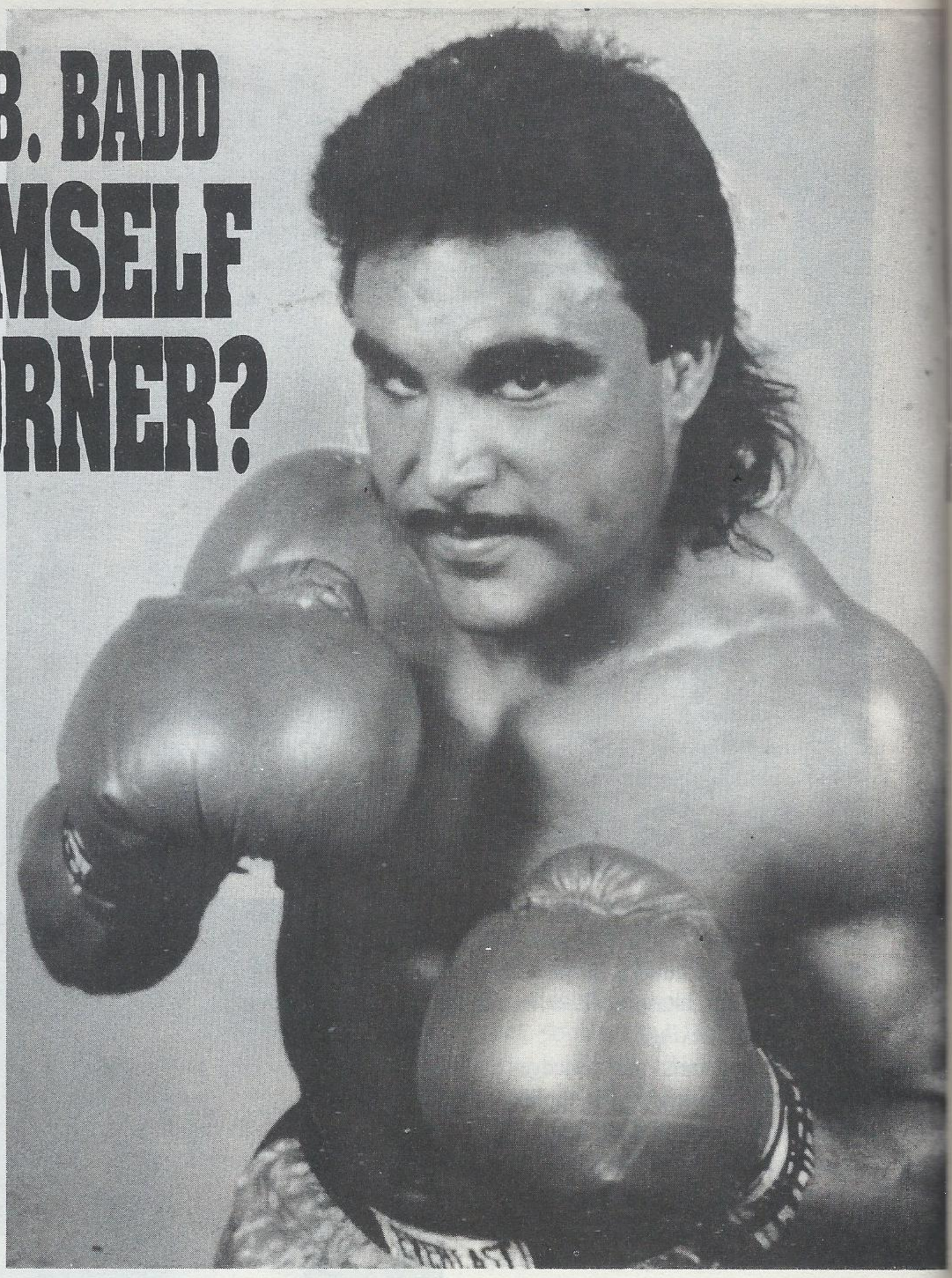
Let's hope they don't soon mourn him as well. □



Often, the attack plans of Friday and Akbar backfired (above) against Kamala. As a rulebreaker, Kamala (battling Eric Embry) held the USWA title three times in 1992.

HAS JOHNNY B. BADD BOXED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER?

No one doubts that Johnny B. Badd is the best boxer in wrestling today. However, knocking out Scotty Flamingo hardly proves it. If Badd doesn't start focusing his attention on wrestling again, he won't be respected as a boxer *or* a wrestler



Photos by Al Bello

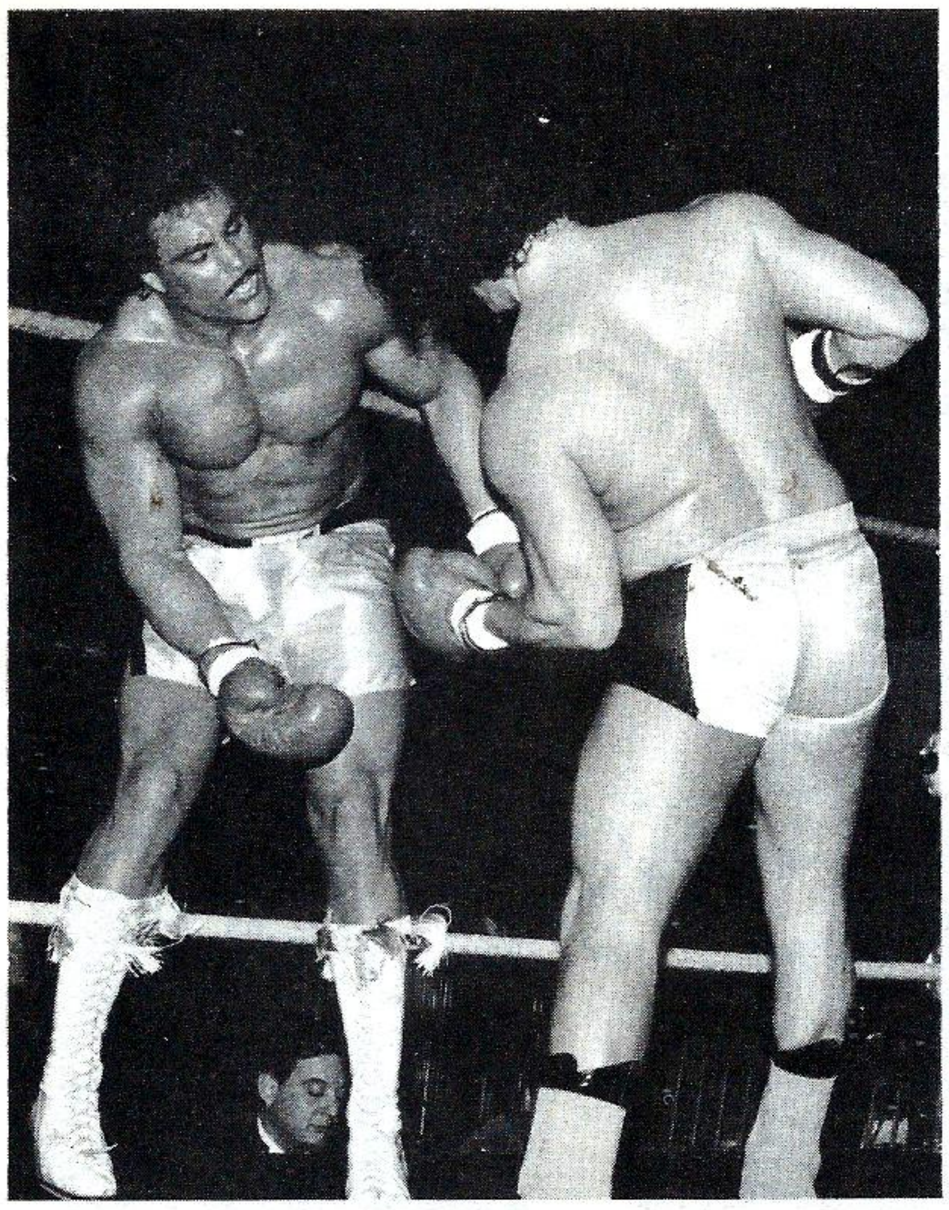
By Andy Rodriguez

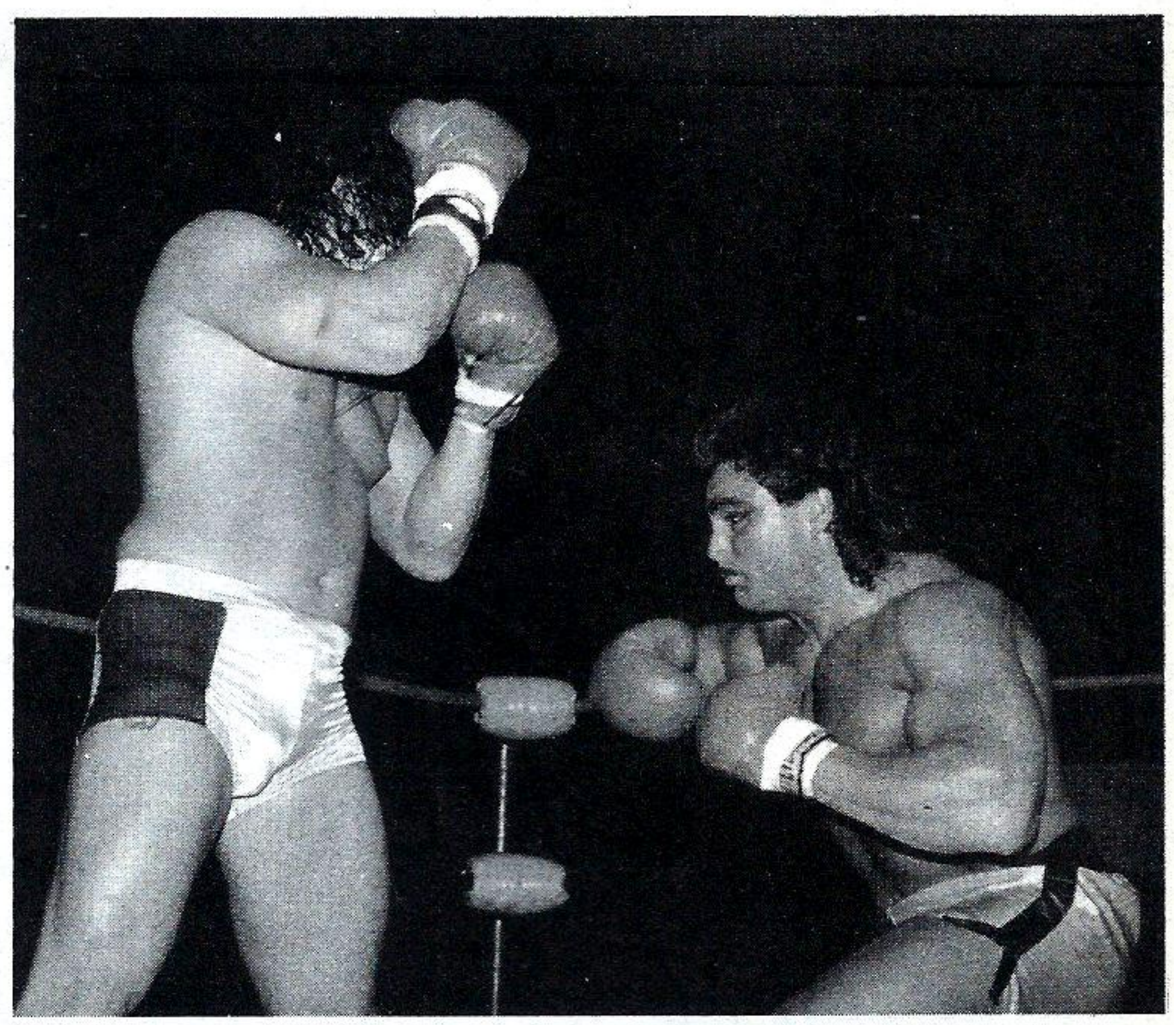
"I'M A BADDDDD man!" cries Johnny B. Badd as female fans young and old crowd up to the barrier to get a closer look at their hero. Their outstretched arms testify to the fact that he is easily one of WCW's most popular athletes.

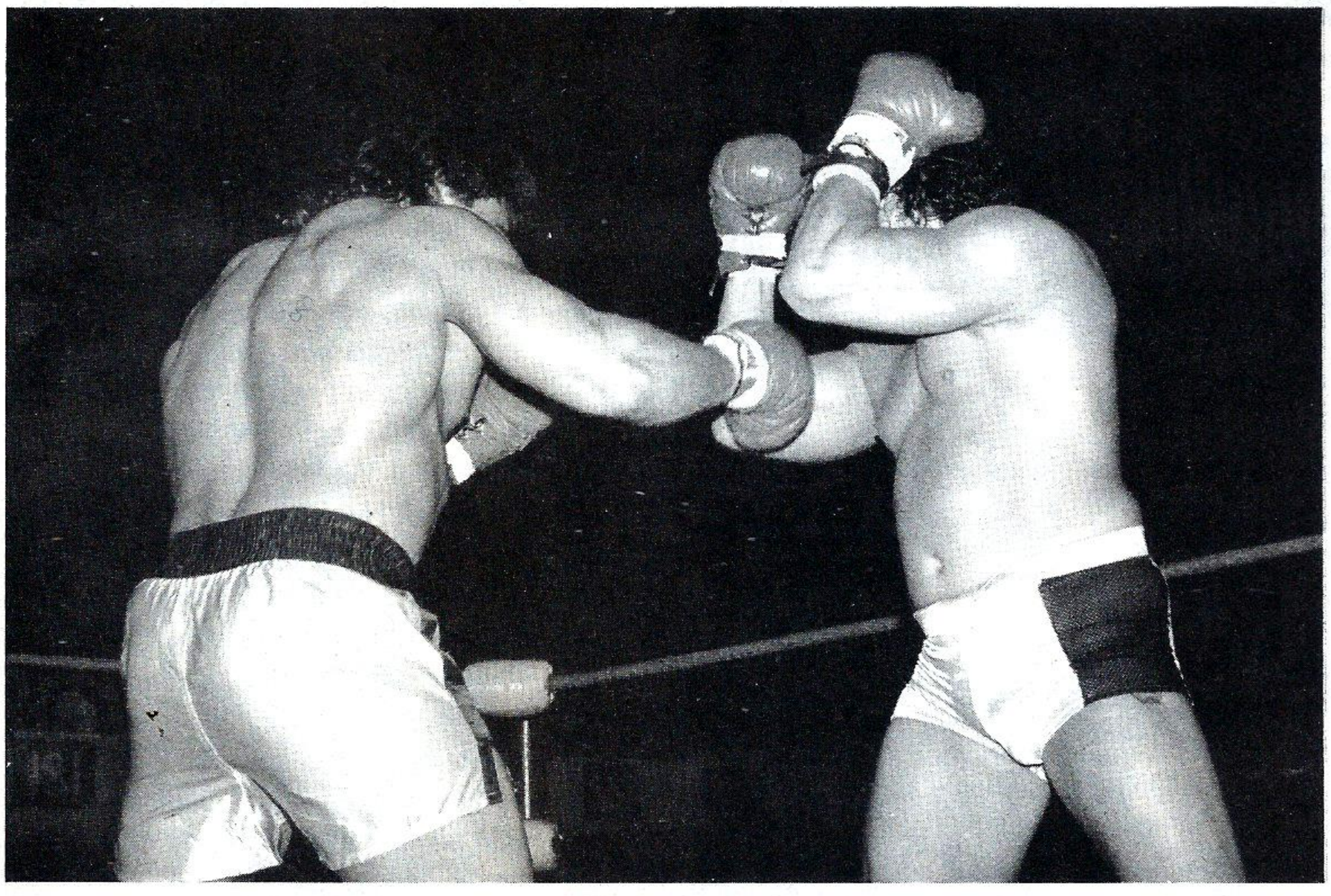
However, it is not all fame and adulation for the flamboyant grappler. He has a big problem, one of which even *he* may not be fully aware.

Badd's dilemma began last November, when he agreed to face Scotty Flamingo in a boxing match. How could there have been a problem with that? Badd was an accomplished amateur boxer, a former Golden Gloves champion. Flamingo was just a loudmouth who was out to prove a point.

On the night of the match, at a Clash of the Champions, Badd was well-prepared, but he didn't come with the entourage that accompanied Flamingo. In Flamingo's corner was The Vegas Connection of "Diamond" Dallas Page and Vinnie Ve-







Johnny B. Badd initially stumbled in boxing Scotty Flamingo (above left), but used his superior pugilistic skills (above and left) to turn back the rule-breaker. The victories haven't gotten Badd anywhere, though.

gas. They boasted their man would pull off the upset.

If Badd had won, this story never would have been written. But Flamingo did indeed pull off the upset. Of course, he didn't win on the strength of his boxing skill. Far from it; Badd clearly outboxed his arrogant foe. Flamingo won because after the first round, Page and Vegas loaded his right glove with water. Once Flamingo connected with the right hand, it was over for Badd.

The result guaranteed that Badd would continue the feud, until he had beaten Flamingo decisively in similar contests. As of this writing, Badd has been more aggressive, winning every boxing rematch against the arrogant youngster.

The problem for Badd is that he doesn't know when to conclude the feud. That, in turn, has put his wrestling career on hold.

One friend of Badd's, Van Hammer, says he foresaw this problem. Despite Badd's obvious advantage, Hammer maintains, he never should have agreed to the first contest.

"Johnny B. had nothing to gain

While Badd had a fine record as an amateur boxer, Flamingo's skills aren't good. Just ask referee Randy Anderson (above). Flamingo leaves himself wide open for Badd (below).

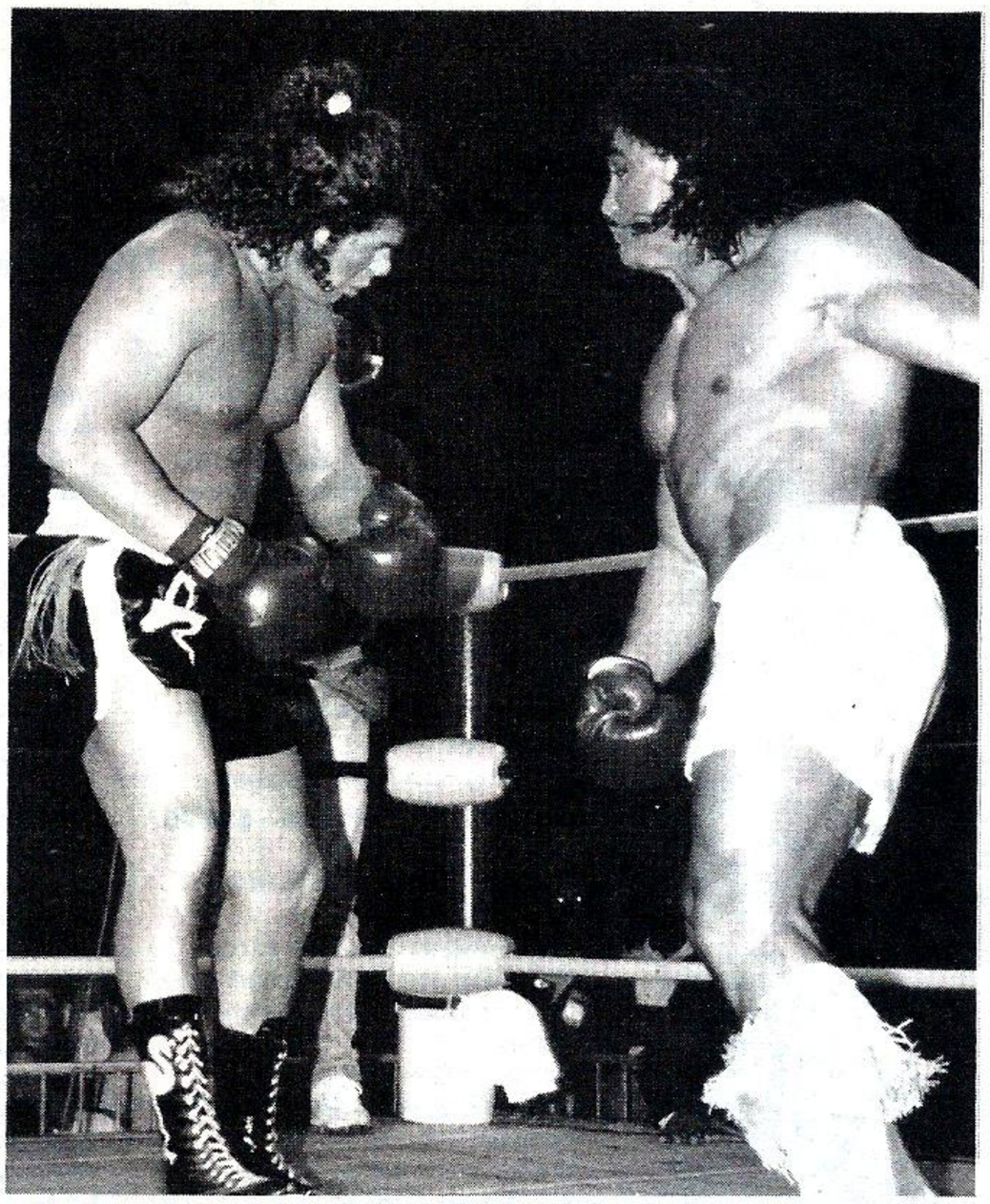
from it," Hammer noted. "If he beats Flamingo, everybody says, 'Big deal. You were supposed to win.' If he loses, it's, 'How in the world did you lose?' A no-win situation."

Others say the ex-boxer is motivated by simple revenge and not by a desire to reaffirm his boxing skills.

"He doesn't realize that his boxing skills aren't going to win him any awards in WCW," said one training partner. "He can't rely on the fact that people are going to respect him as a boxer. Badd is in wrestling. He's not a boxer anymore. He's got to get that into his head."

There is now the danger that Badd will perceived as only being effective as a boxer. That could mean fewer title shots—and he hasn't been getting many of those lately.

"It's bad news for the 'Badd Man,'" said a WCW matchmaker. "He's so obsessed with this boxing thing. Look, we all know he can box. No sane person doubts that at all. Everyone also knows what a good wrestler he can be. He has the talent to win the World title, but if he persists in this boxing tournament of his, he won't even get shots at the TV belt."



Badd has beaten Flamingo soundly (right), but he has diminished his reputation as a wrestler. Before a falling-out between the two, manager Teddy Long (below) incorporated Badd's boxing acumen with his wrestling skills.

Furthermore, Flamingo seems to be ready to give up. He realizes there is no way he can box with Badd. He'd much prefer a more traditional feud. He's ready to take off the gloves—and go with his bare fists.

No matter to Badd. He isn't finished yet. He doesn't want any wrestler in WCW to doubt his boxing ability.

"He wants to make sure no one ever challenges him again," said Rick Steamboat, who defends Badd's actions. "He doesn't want to go through this whole rigamarole again. I hear a few other tough guys have been mulling a boxing match with Badd. He wants to head them off at the pass, in effect. He wants to quiet all the doubters."

Badd may have a valid point, but a more balanced view would be appropriate. More attention to wrestling and less to putting on the gloves. It is very easy to incorporate his fistic skills into his grappling style—without actually boxing.

"He's got some awesome hands," said a WCW trainer. "Quick and powerful. His footwork is brilliant, not to mention his lateral movement. All those skills combined make him a wrestler to watch out for. He doesn't need to fight three-minute rounds against these bozos like Flamingo."

Others echo those beliefs. Badd could be a top-10 WCW star for as long as he wants. Right now, that's not what he wants.

Badd needs to make a choice. Perhaps he still has the desire to compete as a boxer against *real* boxers. Perhaps he's growing tired of dropkicks and armdrag takedowns. A try as a pro boxer might quench his thirst for combat and drive him back to wrestling. Or he might stay in boxing.

Someone joked that Badd has become "the sequined non sequitur of wrestling." Cute, but somehow appropriate.

Johnny, you're better than that.□

Special Section:

TAG TEAMS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

They might never get together, but we wish they would. The tag team picture is better than ever in wrestling, but we can improve on what's great. Our choices for the 10 tag teams we'd like to see are sometimes shocking, many times laughable and, in every case, intriguing!

ONCE IN A while, a wrestling fan's dream is realized. Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage combined to form The Megapowers. Savage and The Ultimate Warrior almost got together as The Ultimate Maniacs, but we ended up instead with Savage and Curt Hennig. That's not bad, either!

And, of course, nobody can deny something went very right when brothers Rick and Scott Steiner decided to pursue their wrestling careers together. The Steiner brothers are, indeed, a dream tag team.

But there is tremendous room for imagination in wrestling. So often, tag teams that make perfect sense—or even imperfect sense!—are never formed. Perhaps the two wrestlers never were in the same federation together. Maybe they never saw the connection others saw. Maybe they just didn't feel like teaming. Or maybe they thought it wouldn't work.

That certainly is a possibility. Maybe the tag teams of our dreams really wouldn't work. Maybe we've missed a subtle factor that would've kept Superman and Batman from dominating wrestling for a hundred years (Superman can fly, Batman can't?). Maybe Batman and Robin—and Superman in singles—was the right mix all along.

Stiller and Meara. George and Gracie. Abbott and Costello. All of those comedy teams worked perfectly. How about Groucho and Costello? Not bad, eh?

Reagan and Gore. Clinton and Nixon. All bad dream political combinations. Fred and Ginger. Fred and Wilma. Fred and Ethel. Just perfect for the screen.

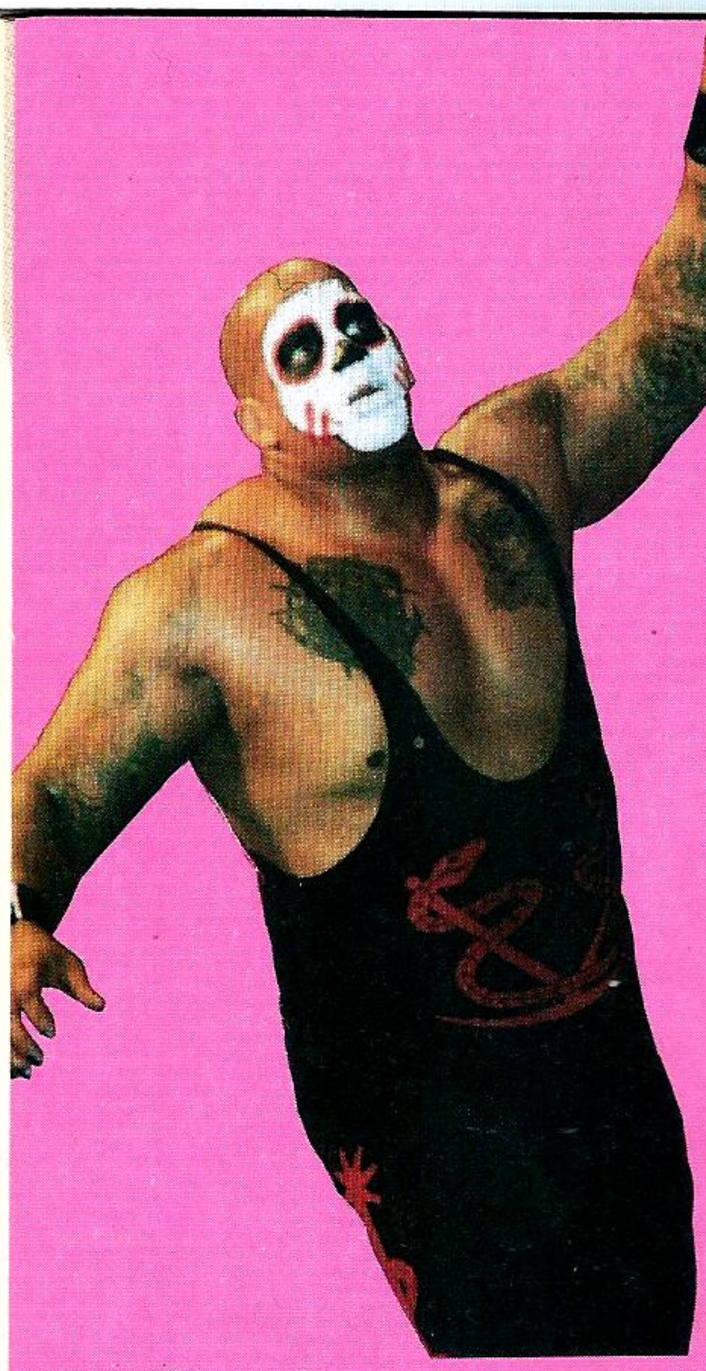
How about the ring? Pairing The Undertaker with Michael Hayes just doesn't make sense at all, but there are perhaps hundreds of pairings that *do* make sense.

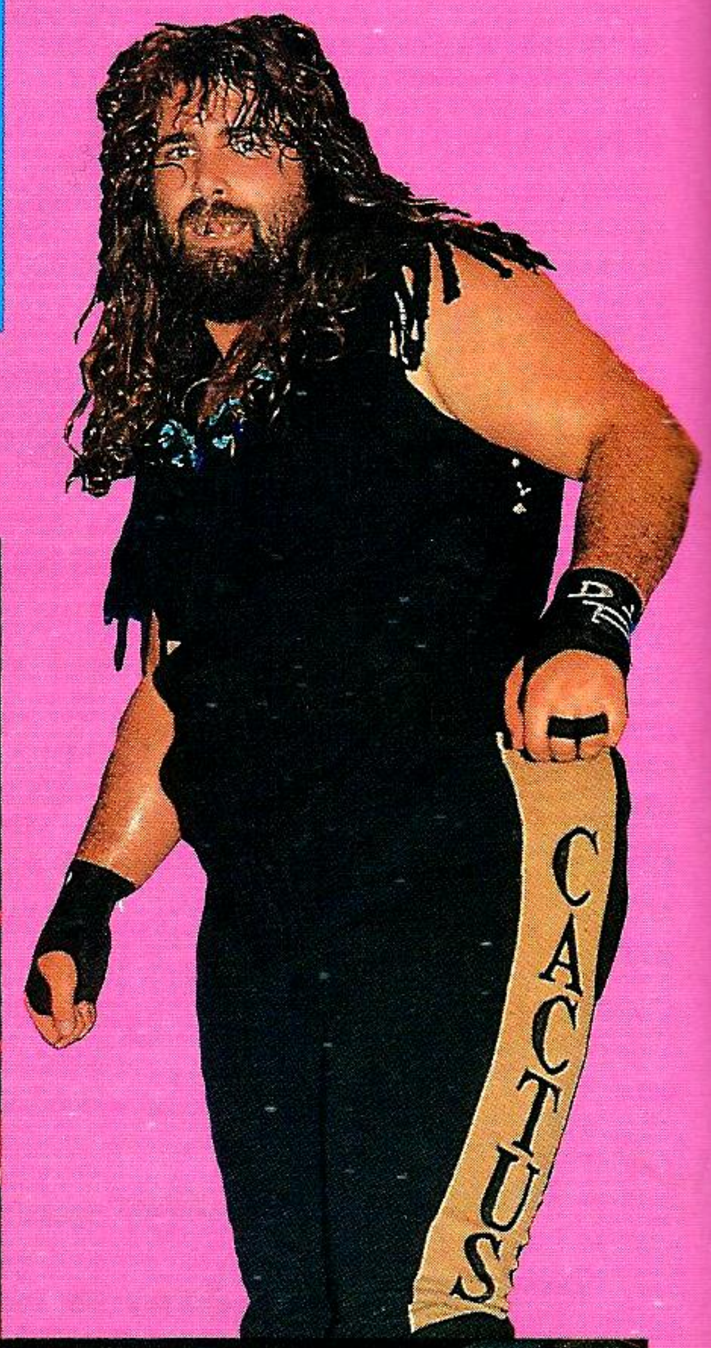
We came up with 20. Then we cut the list to 10. And that's what we have here: 10 tag teams we'd absolutely love to see.

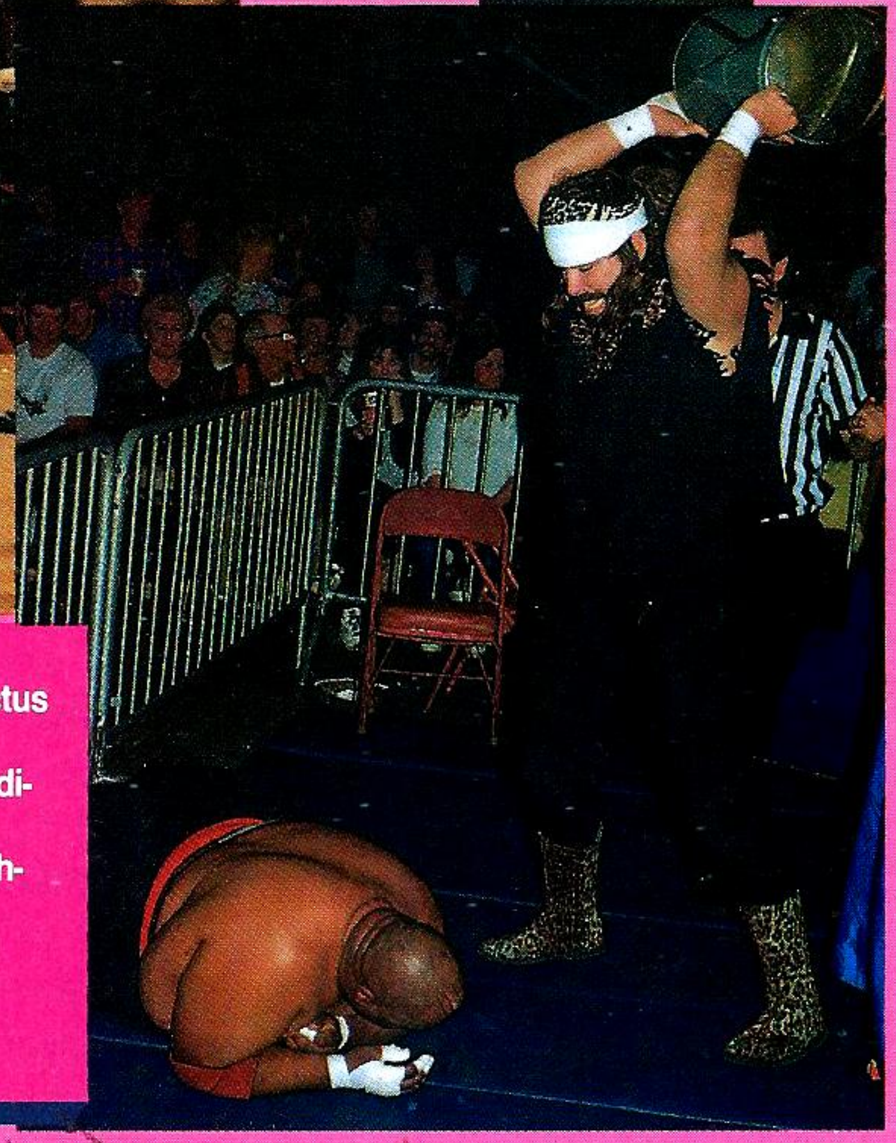
There are specific reasons behind each pairing, whether it's a similar past, similar styles, similar interests, or similar physiques. In almost every case, we were concerned about whether the tag team would actually work and decided that it would. In a few cases, we just came up with tag teams that might be entertaining to watch.

You'll have no trouble figuring out which ones are which. So, turn the page, examine our selections, and dream along with us. By the way, we'd love to hear about your dream tag teams. Who knows? Perhaps all of our dreams will come true!

PAPA SHANGO & CACTUS JACK







Papa Shango (above) and Cactus Jack (right) are both crazed individuals who use different methods to strike unbridled fear in their opponents.

Papa Shango, a voodoo master, and Cactus Jack, an absolute maniac, would make the most unpredictable tag team ever. Are there two weirder men in the sport? In the *history* of the sport? In the world?

Did we *really* say we'd like to see this team?

Obviously, no opponent would like to run into them. Although Bret Hart managed to overcome Shango's voodoo tricks, the madman from parts unknown still has an air of mystery that puts a spell on opponents even before he goes into his black magic routine.

As for Cactus Jack, his wide and sudden mood swings have scared off teammates as well as opponents. Perhaps Papa Shango is the only wrestler suited for a partnership with Cactus Jack.

But don't doubt their abilities. Papa Shango has held his own against the top wrestlers in the WWF, while Cactus Jack played his own version of Truth or Consequences in a falls-count-anywhere match against Sting last year.

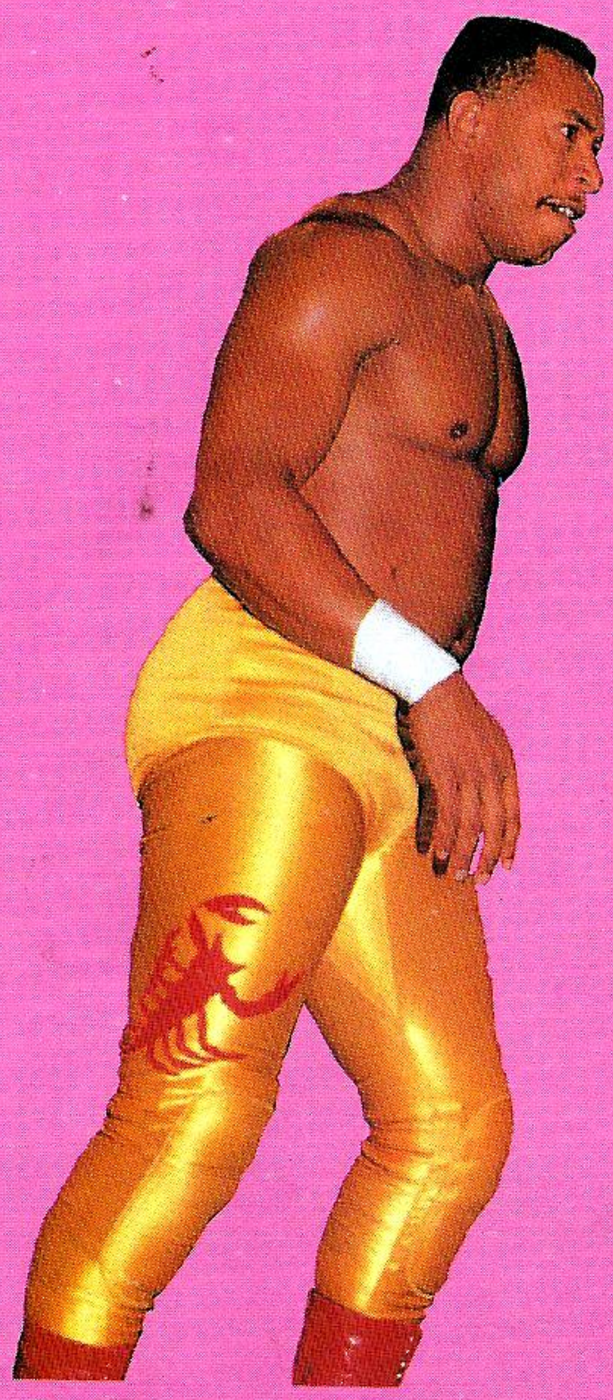
"Jack seems to enjoy pain," Sting said. "I've never wrestled anyone like him. There's no way to predict his next move because I don't think *he* knows what he's going to do."

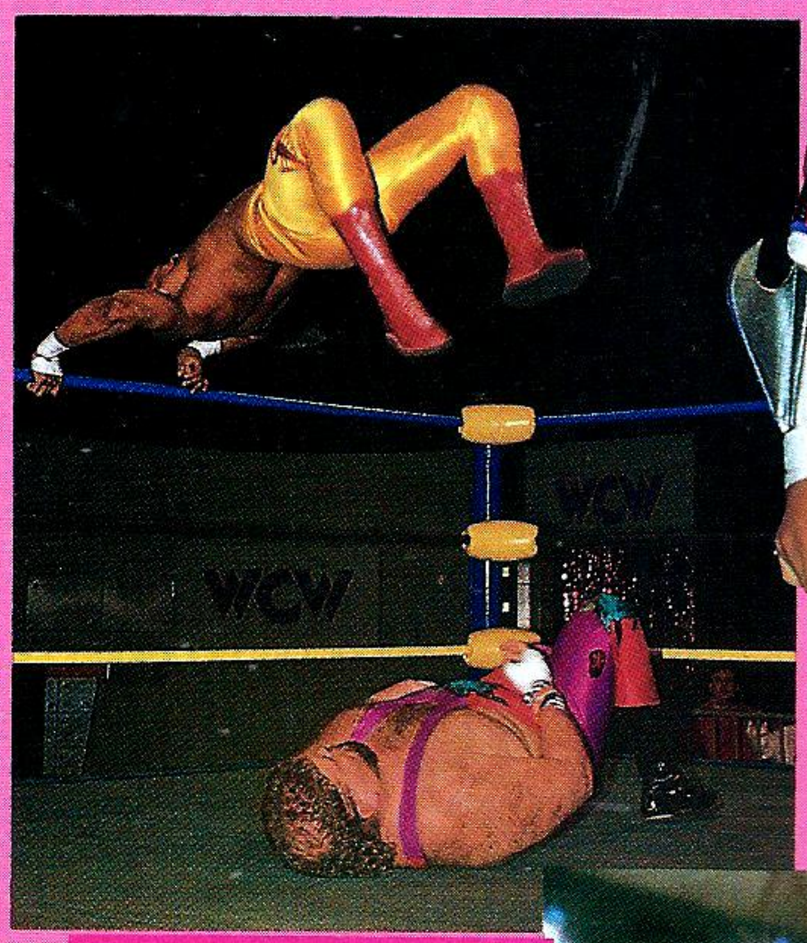
Shango's moves are more calculated. His voodoo magic had The Ultimate Warrior vomiting all over the WWF. Hart temporarily removed Shango's mystery, but it didn't stop him altogether. Shango, like Cactus Jack, is totally unpredictable. He does not operate by the laws of logic.

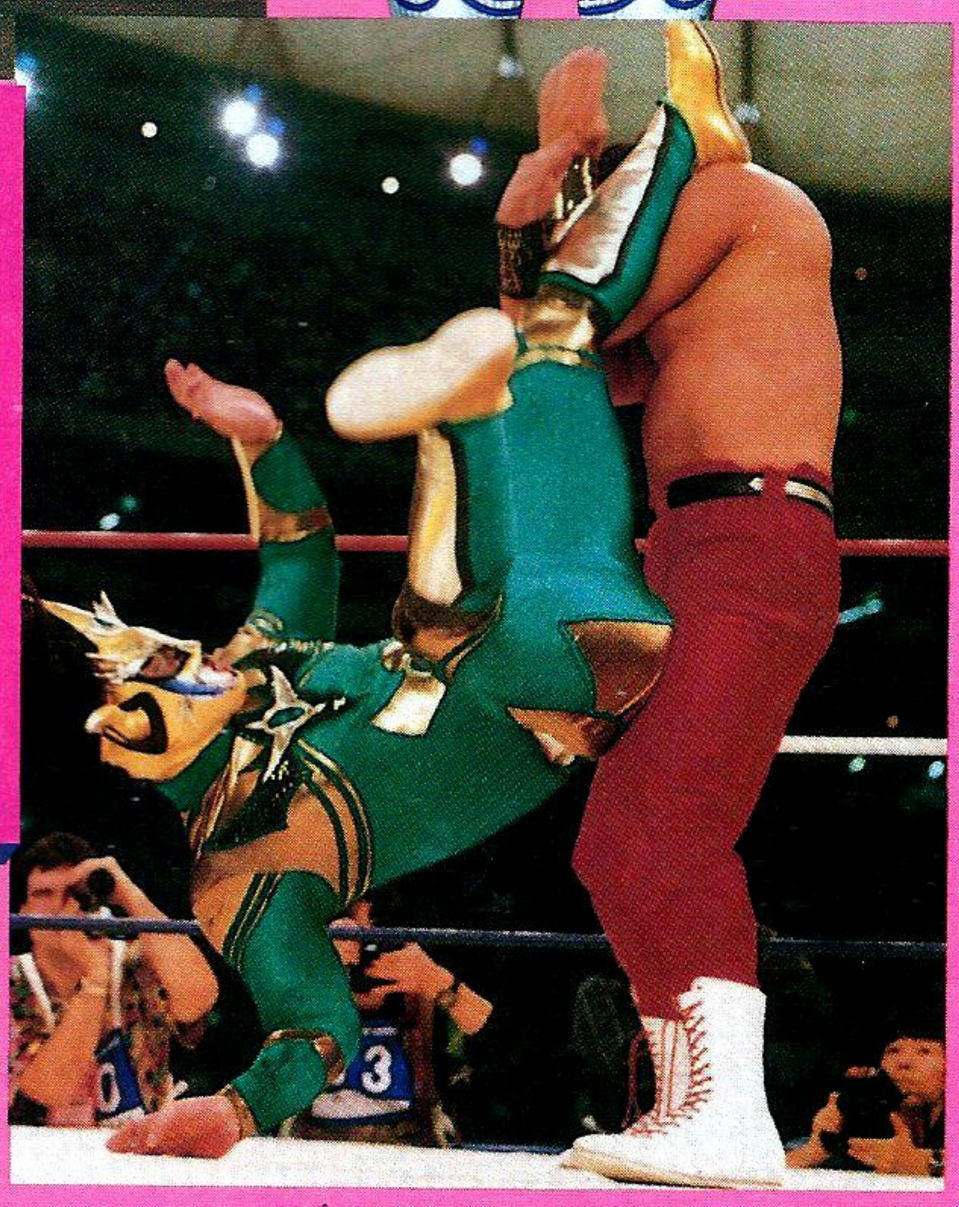
Yeah, we'd like to see this tag team. Just like those people who go to car races for the wrecks and to hockey games for the fights, we'd like to see Shango and Cactus Jack together.

Just to see what's possible.

2 COLD SCORPIO & JUSHIN LIGER







2 Cold Scorpio (above) is the sport's newest aerial sensation. Jushin Liger (right) is the aerial wrestler who serves as the sport's measuring stick. Together, the duo would need clearance from the flight tower.

Seasons come and go in wrestling. Take just about any six-month period over the past five years, and our choice for the dream high-flying tag team would have differed each time. Here we are, in the first six months of 1993, and our choice is 2 Cold Scorpio and Jushin Liger.

At least one more person agrees with us. His name is 2 Cold Scorpio.

"Sure, I'd *love* to team with Liger!" Scorpio said with a smile. "You're not going to find a single aerial wrestler—or any wrestler in general—who doesn't have tremendous respect for that guy. He doesn't have much size, but he just might be the greatest aerial star ever. Hey, being mentioned in the same *breath* as him is an honor."

As this magazine went to press, Liger was wrestling in Japan and was unavailable for comment. But those close to the Japanese superstar say a Liger-Scorpio pairing could never happen. Liger has never teamed regularly with an American star; for him to team with a youngster such as Scorpio would be quite extraordinary.

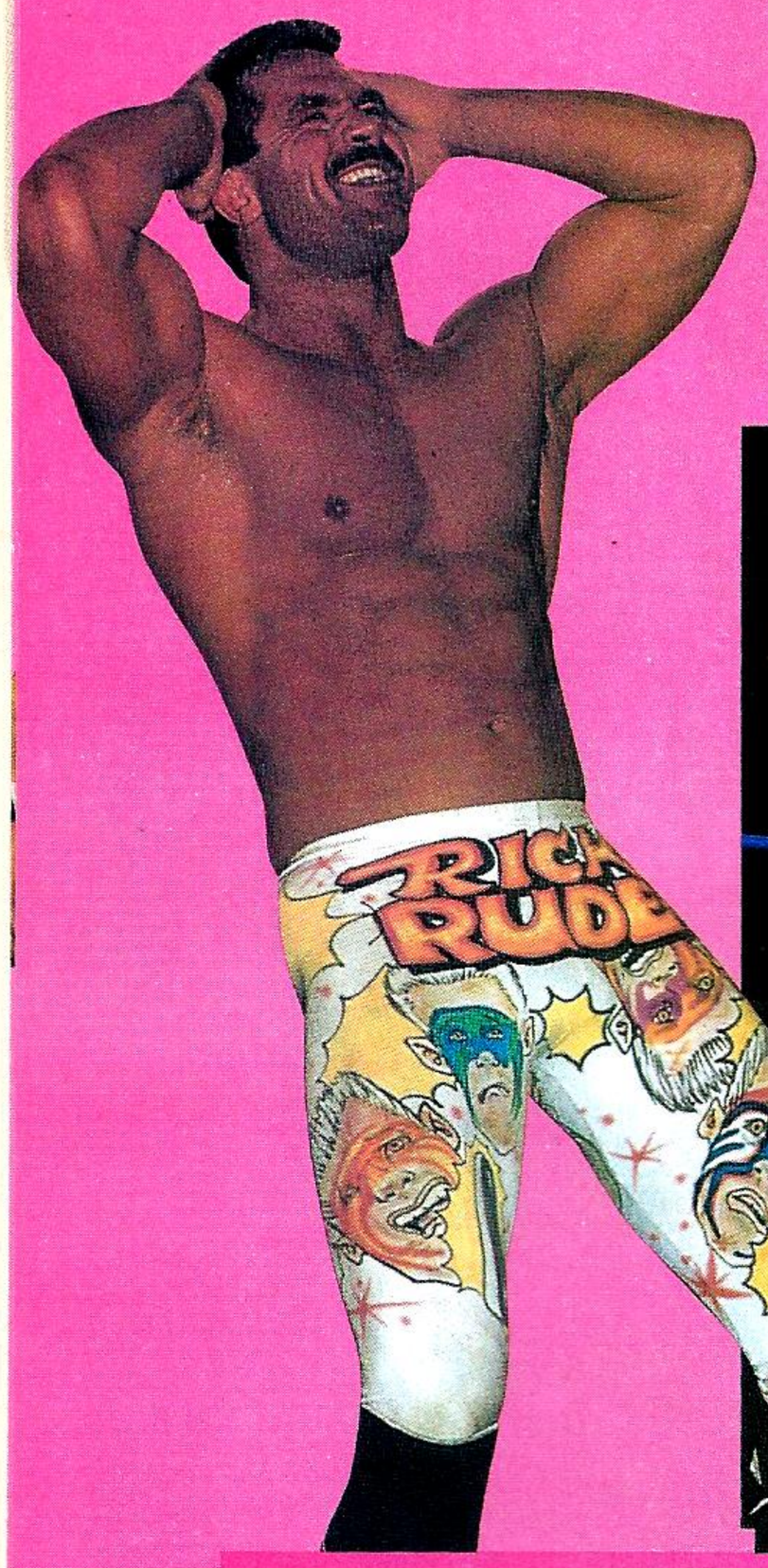
"Just keep dreaming," said Japanese correspondent H. Hosaka. "Liger has his own agenda. He has no use for Scorpio. Besides, Liger's too serious to go for Scorpio's dance act."

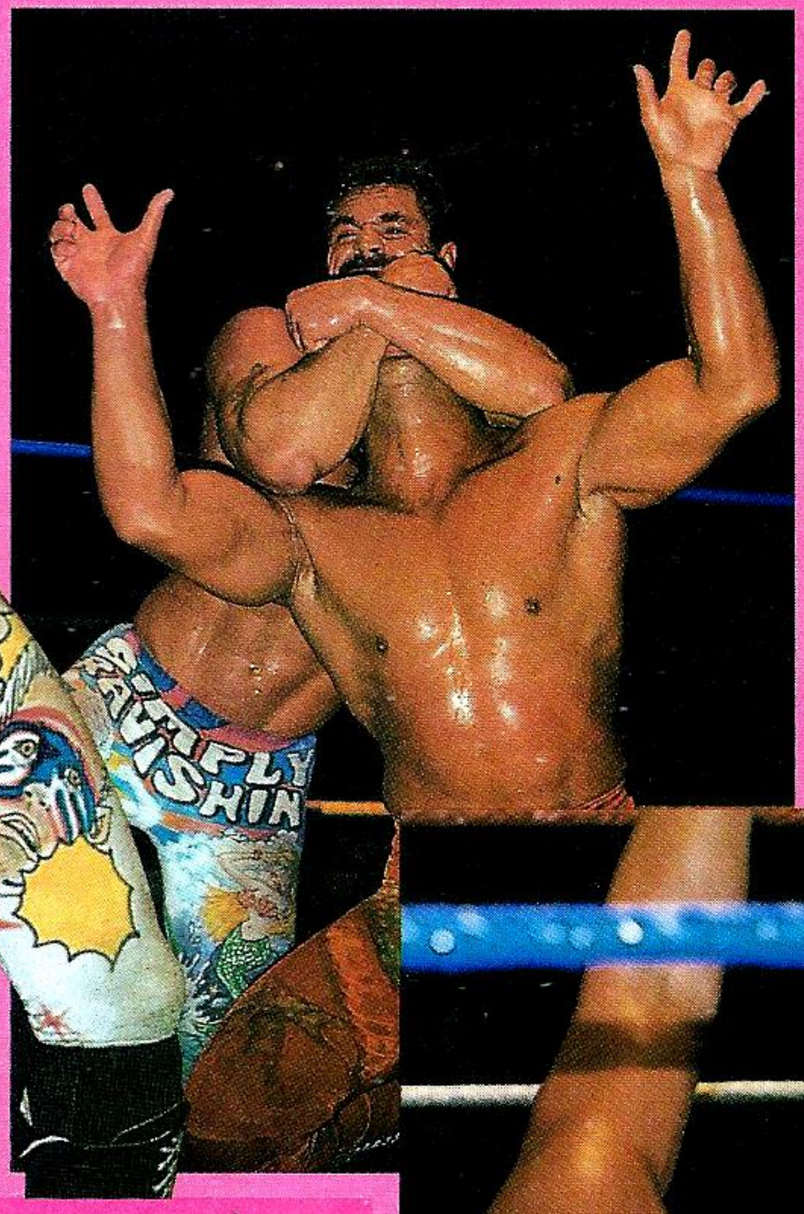
That said, here are a few reasons the pairing *should* happen:

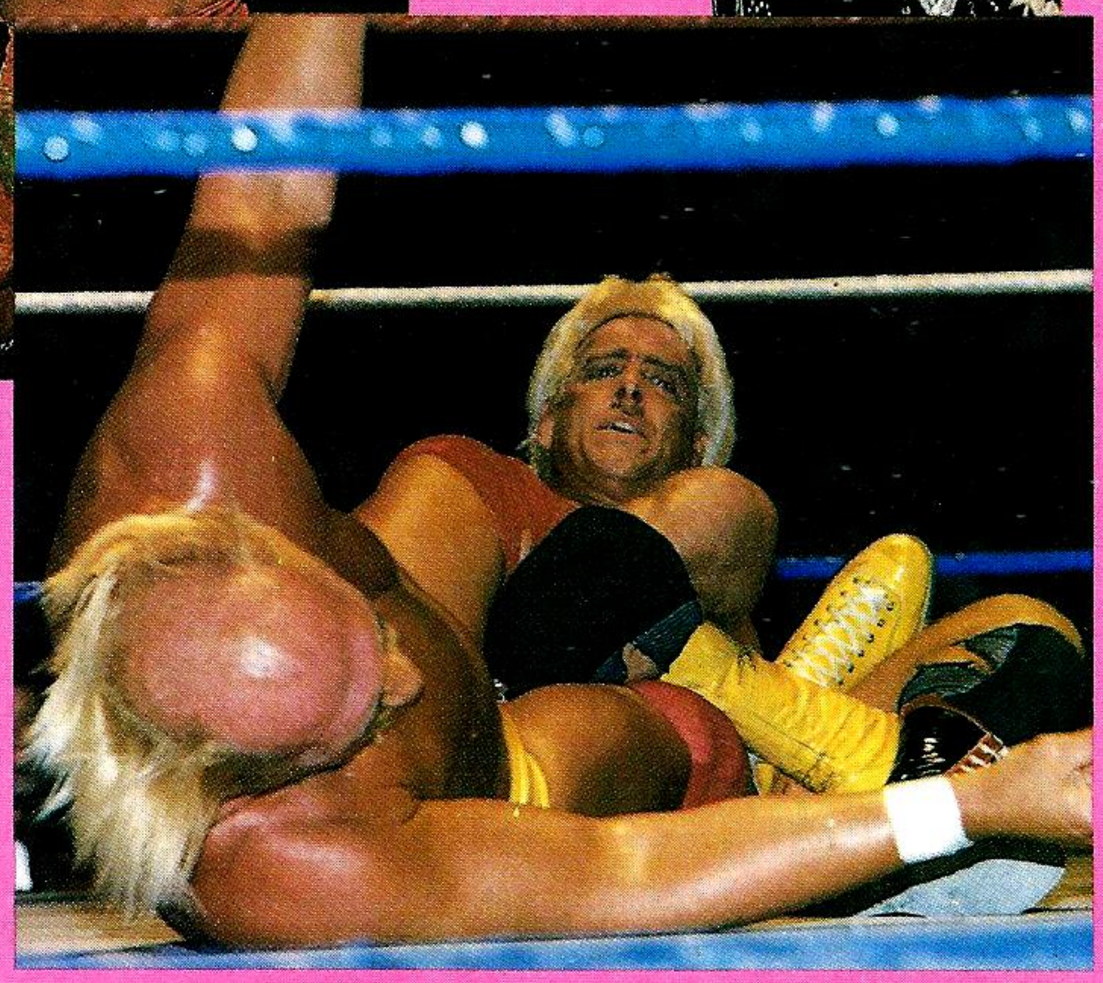
Scorpio might one day be Liger's equal at executing aerial maneuvers from a standing start. Secondly, the fans adore them both. They could be the most popular team in the sport in a matter of weeks.

"That's not exactly what I had in mind," Scorpio said. "But, yeah, it would be something special!"

RICK RUDE & RIC FLAIR







Most fans consider Rick Rude (above) and Ric Flair (right) two of the most egotistical men in the sport, and they are. But they are two of the most skilled men in the sport as well. As a team, their physical and mental skills would be overwhelming.

Two versions of the name Ric/k? Nah, too easy. Two of the most arrogant wrestlers in history? Nah, too easy again. Two of the most talented wrestlers the sport has ever seen?

Exactly.

Sometimes pairing superstars doesn't make for a perfect mix. Hulk Hogan and Randy Savage were a so-so tag team. Savage and Curt Hennig worked well together, but they still seemed to be missing that extra something. Maybe they just needed some practice.

We're certain Rude and Flair would work beautifully together. Both are master technicians with a thorough knowledge of all aspects of the sport. If brawling is necessary, they'll brawl. If the match calls for science, they're lab technicians. And when it comes to thinking out a match, only Flair can outthink Rude.

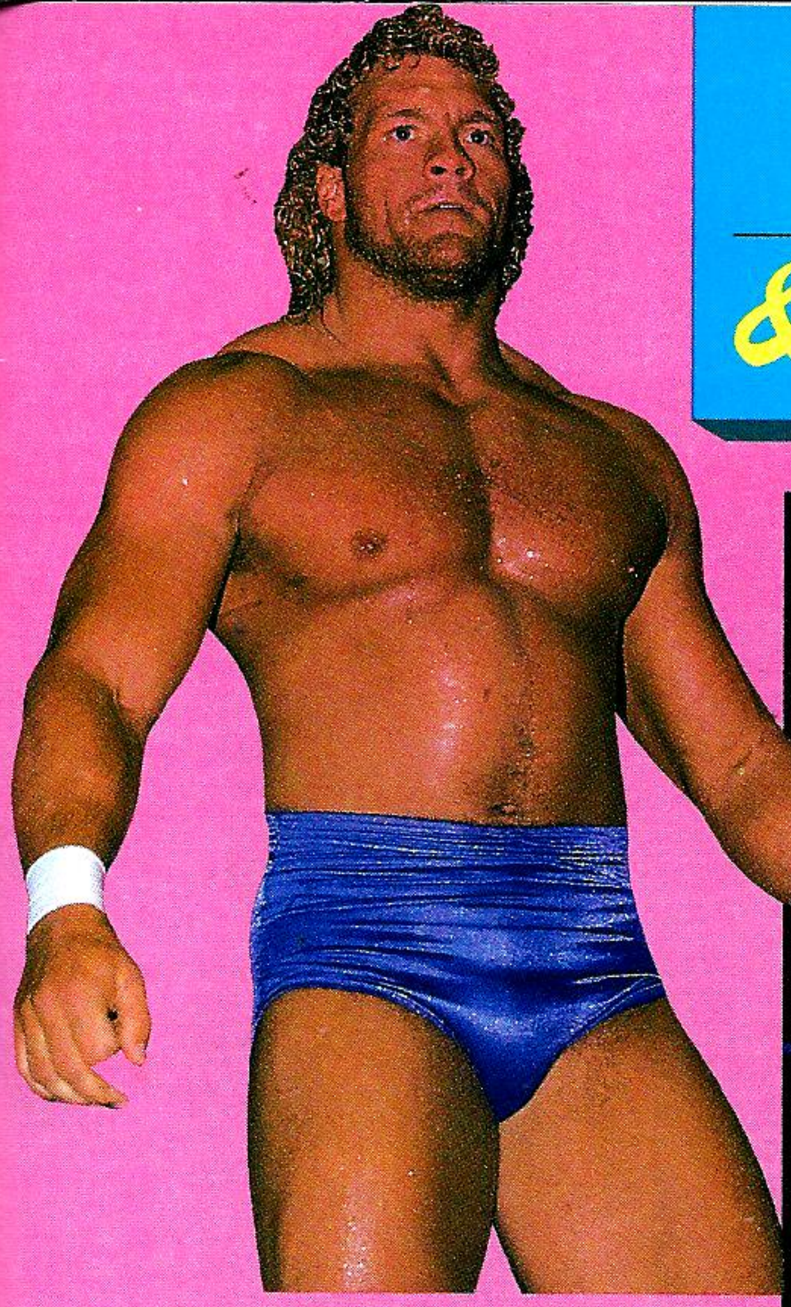
And about that arrogance part: Yeah, these guys sure do love themselves!

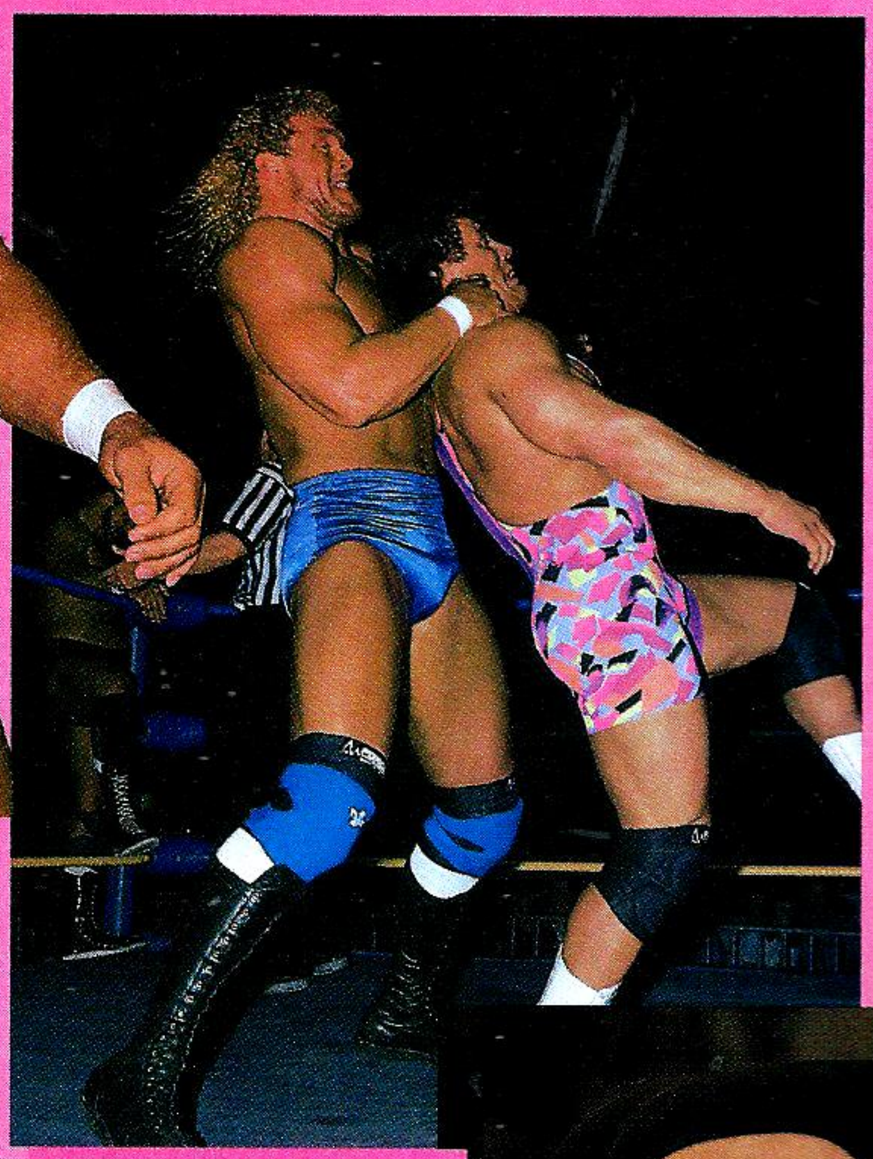
"Flair was by far the best wrestler of the 1980s—no matter what Hulk Hogan fans might say—and Rude wasn't too far behind," WCW expert Donald Wayne said. "Now that we're into the 1990s, Rude is slowly staking his claim as the best wrestler, and Flair is still keeping up pretty well."

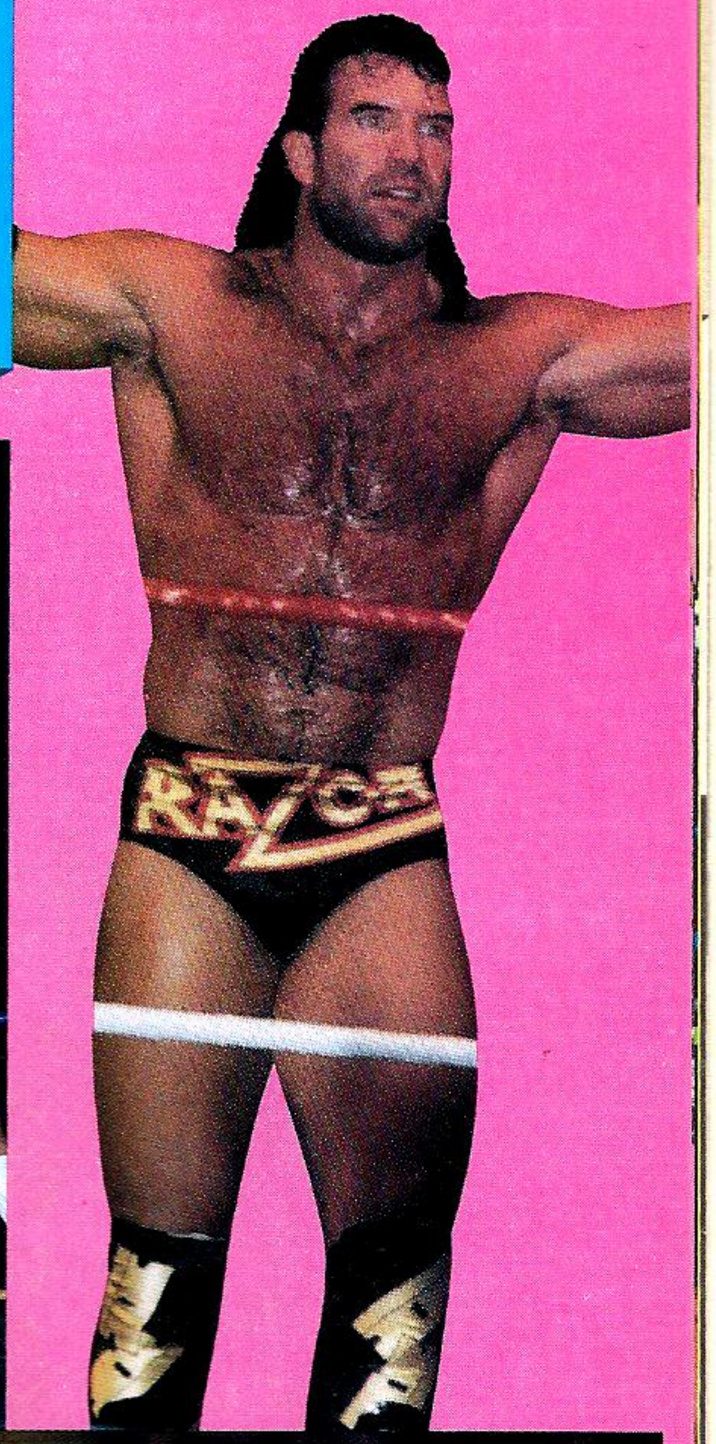
Their personalities are so similar. Their styles are nearly identical. Rude and Flair can inspire disgust and awe at the same time. They are entertaining and colorful. Best of all, they'd work so well together because both are committed to one thing: winning.

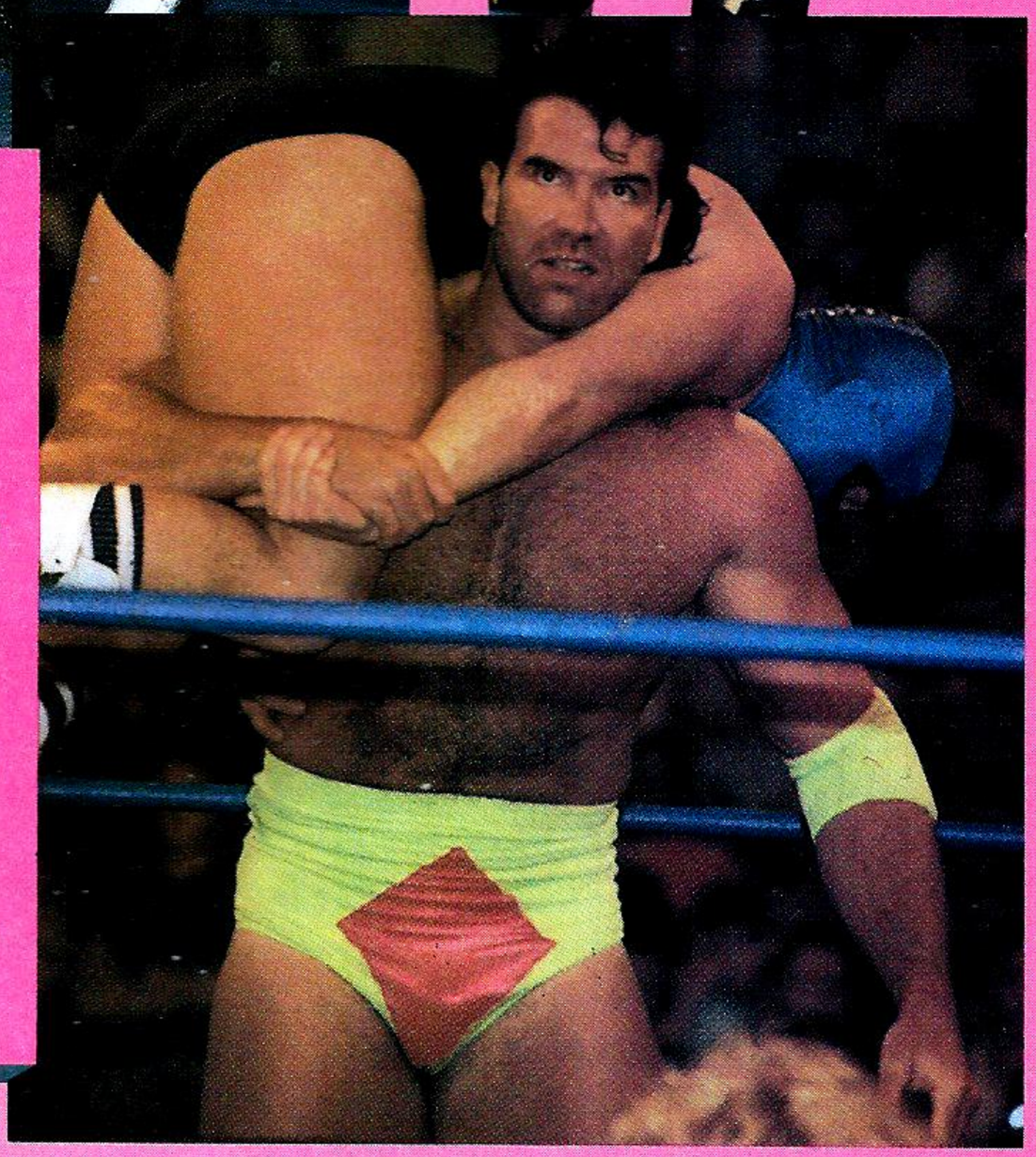
Rude and Flair. Together. It's a dream.

SID JUSTICE & RAZOR RAMON









Sid Justice (above) and Razor Ramon (right) are two of the sport's giants who have yet to win a major title. As teammates, they would be able to provide the extra push for each other that seems to be missing in their singles matches.

Sid Justice and Razor Ramon have one thing in common besides size and muscle. While achieving enough success in their chosen profession to make a terrific living and be considered stars, neither has reached the plateau of greatness that was predicted for them.

Maybe they both need the push that the other could provide.

They certainly have the size. Here are two of the most perfectly sculptured men in the sport. Justice and Ramon are mountains of muscle. At one time, Justice lacked the killer instinct one would normally associate with such bulk. Ramon still falls short.

Ramon will kick a man who is down, but he often fails to assert himself when that man gets up. Justice would push him hard. In the gym, they'd constantly try to outlift each other. In the ring, losing would be unforgivable.

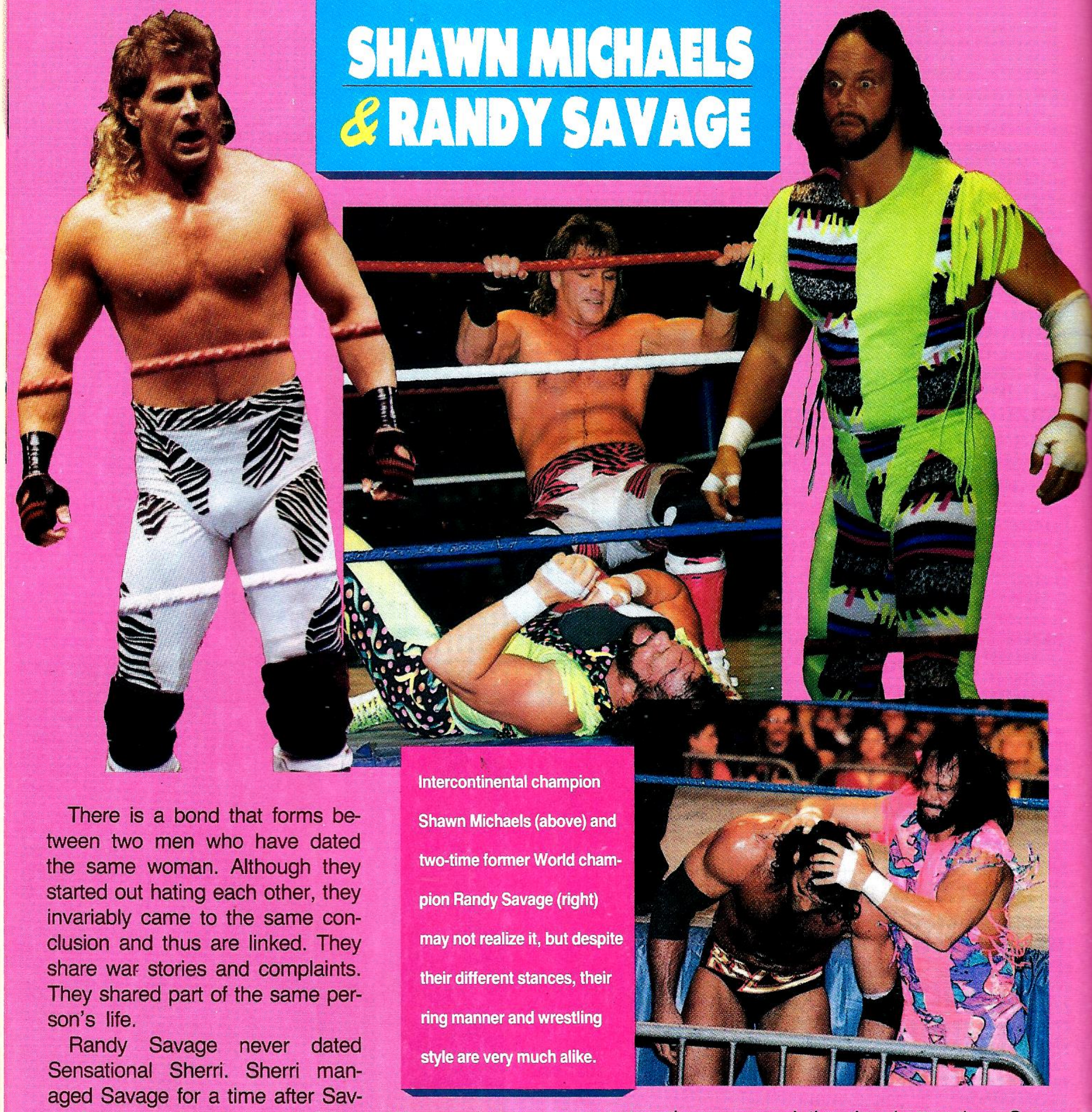
They'd come at their opponents with waves of power. There would be no rest for the weakened and injured. Just imagine:

Justice tags in and powerslams his opponent. Ramon tags in and delivers a hard kick to the midsection. Justice comes back with a kneedrop. Ramon throws in a few hard chops for good measure and scores the pin.

There's not much speed in this team, but speed isn't always necessary in the tight confines of a wrestling ring. Ramon and Justice could get worn down by a team with better lasting power, but we believe pure muscle power would win the day.

This is a team every wrestling fan would love to watch. In the age of power, nothing could be better than Justice and Ramon.

SHAWN MICHAELS & RANDY SAVAGE



Intercontinental champion Shawn Michaels (above) and two-time former World champion Randy Savage (right) may not realize it, but despite their different stances, their ring manner and wrestling style are very much alike.

There is a bond that forms between two men who have dated the same woman. Although they started out hating each other, they invariably came to the same conclusion and thus are linked. They share war stories and complaints. They shared part of the same person's life.

Randy Savage never dated Sensational Sherri. Sherri managed Savage for a time after Savage's stormy breakup with Elizabeth. Shawn Michaels and Sherri never outwardly dated, but there were whispers in the WWF locker rooms that they often shared the same mirror.

Now that Savage and Michaels, two very similar wrestlers, have passed the Sherri point of their lives, it's time for them to get together. They were after each other for so long. But we don't want them to just talk to each other. We want them to get together and wrestle.

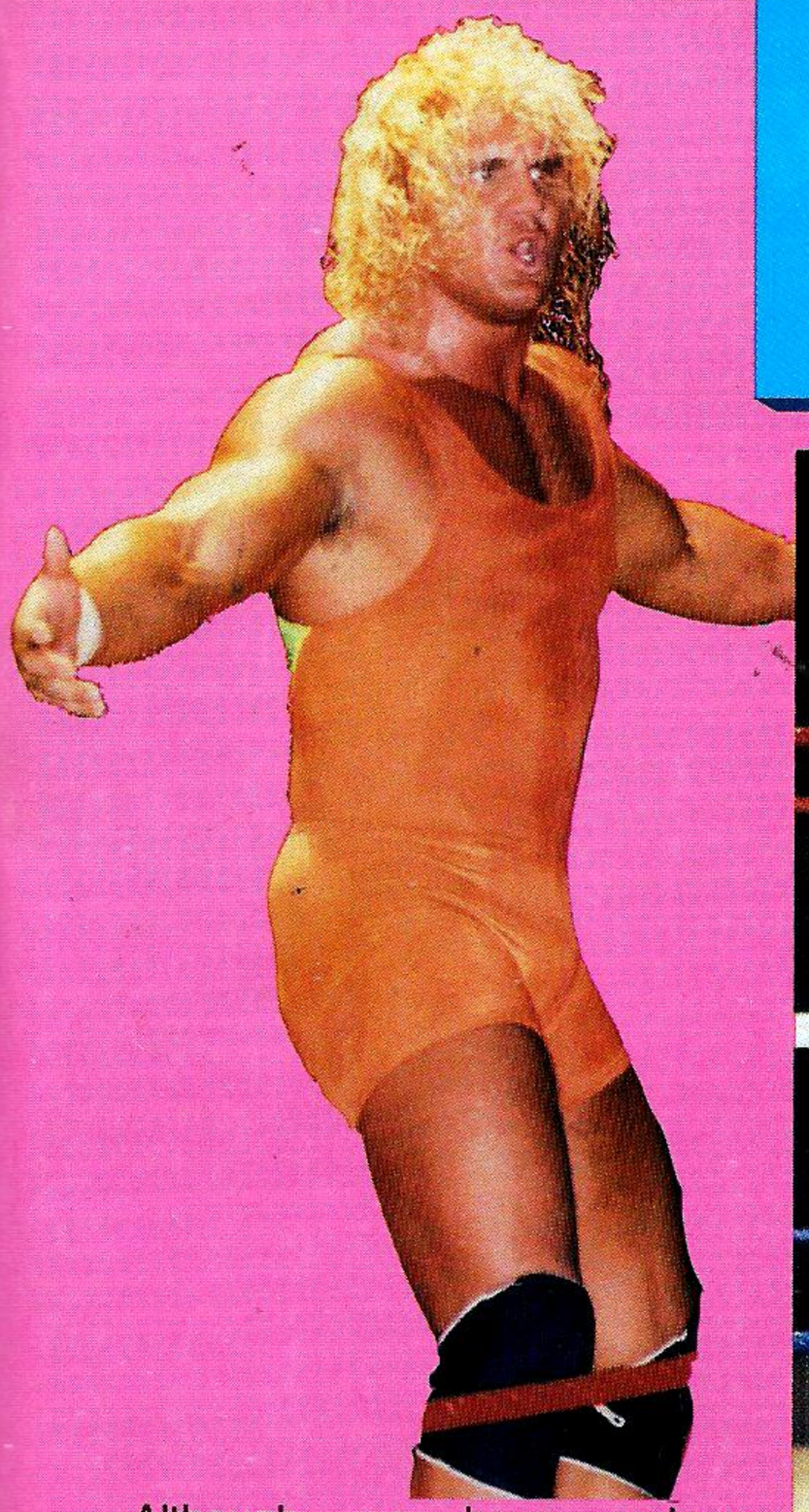
If nothing else, Sensational Sherri is a cool, calculating woman. She is also a good judge of talent. It's no accident Sherri chose Savage and Michaels as her men of the moment. She chose men with the same games.

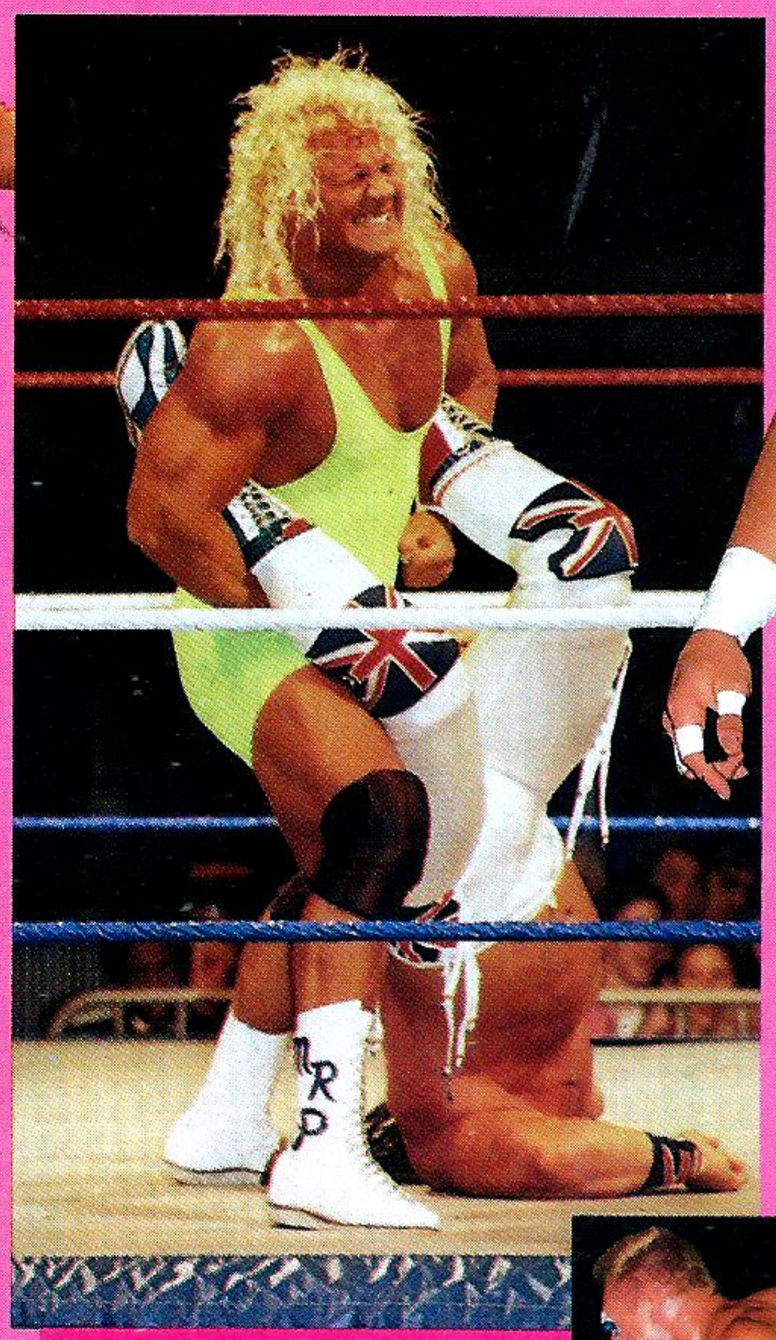
Neither Savage nor Michaels is particularly big, but each rely on ego, killer instinct, and fine all-around skills. Few men move around the ring better than Savage and Michaels.

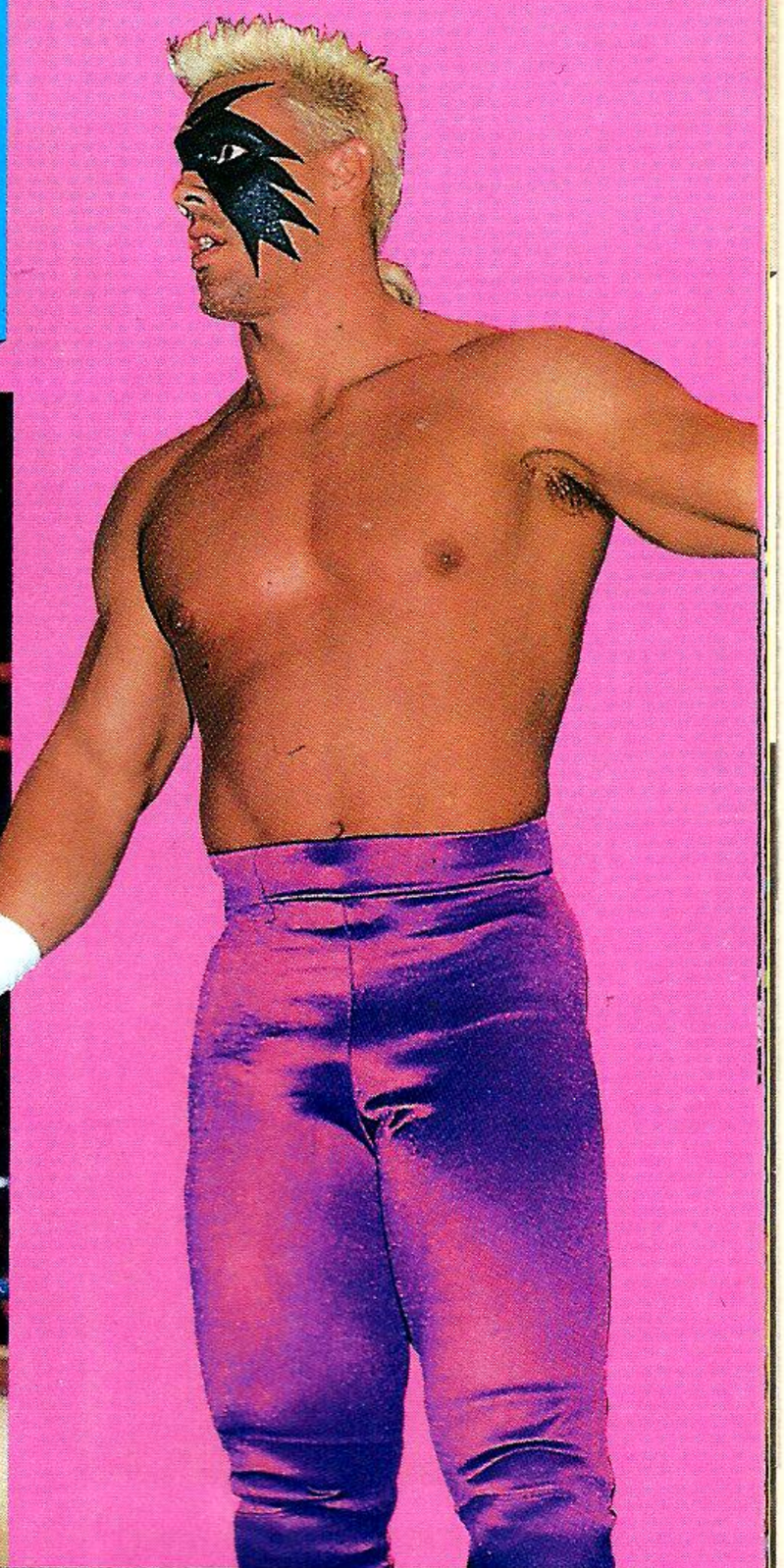
"Boy Toy" and "Macho Man." We like the sound. Michaels is an accomplished tag team wrestler (with Marty Jannetty as The Rockers) while Savage has never had a solid tag team partner. We think it's time for Savage to make the jump and get the one WWF title he's never won: the World tag team championship.

It could happen with Michaels.

CURT HENNIG & STING







The straightforward approach of Curt Hennig (above) and the charismatic flavor brought to the ring by Sting (right) would make these two superb athletes an ideal team.

Although we have serious doubts about Curt Hennig's ability to stay straight, we'd love to see "Mr. Perfect" and Sting team under any circumstances. They have never met in the ring, they've never even been in the same federation together, but what they have in common is far more important than their differences.

Combine Hennig's no-nonsense approach and technical knowledge with Sting's flamboyance, and you have the perfect ingredients for a perfect tag team.

Neither man can be called small, but both wrestle bigger than their actual size. Hennig didn't hesitate to use his power on Razor Ramon—a seemingly suicidal strategy—while Sting has been successful against much larger men.

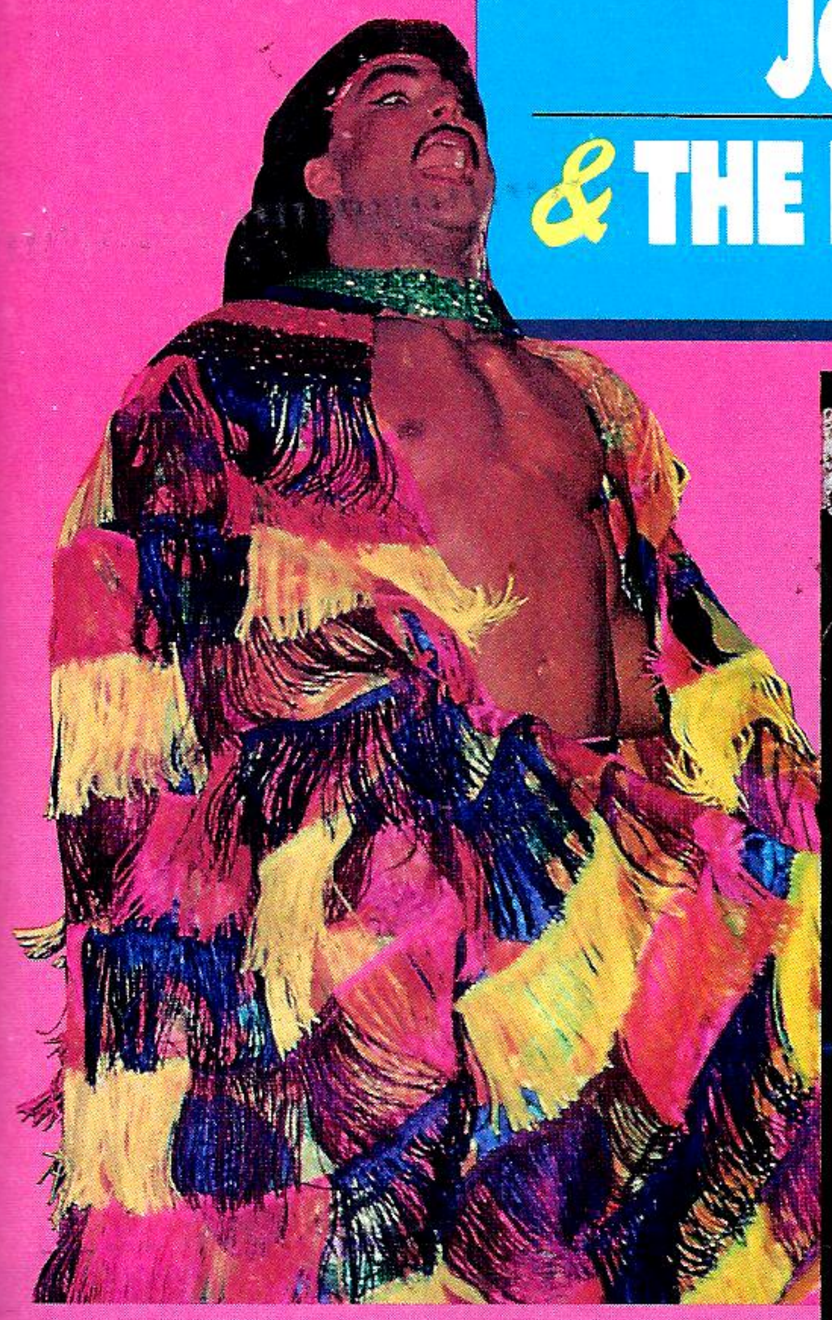
Sting and Hennig have both been highly successful singles wrestlers. Sting is a two-time WCW World champion while Hennig is a former AWA World and WWF Intercontinental champ. They've both achieved their success in the same way, without relying on gimmicks and instead depending on hard work.

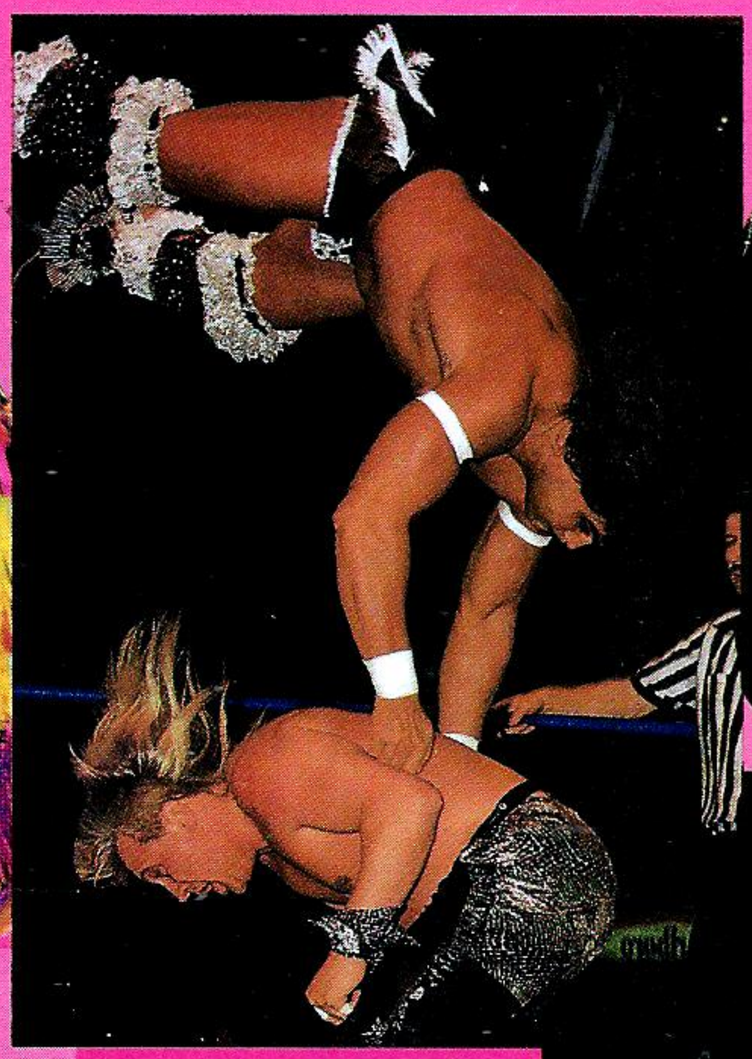
Neither man has ever found the perfect partner. Hennig's partnership with Savage is basically a revenge pairing as both go after Ric Flair, Ramon, and Bobby Heenan. Sting has always been at the center of attention in WCW and, therefore, has dedicated himself to singles wrestling.

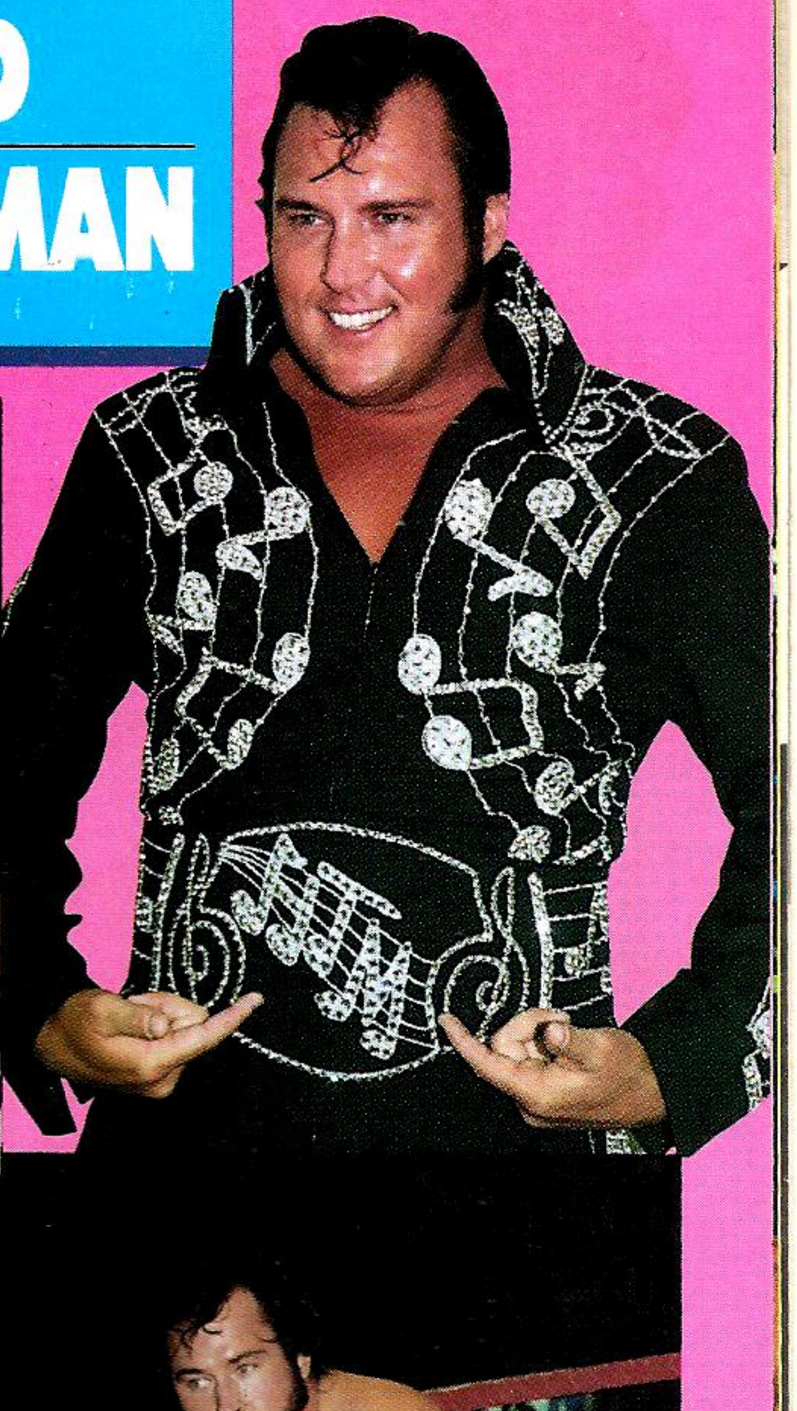
The subtle differences between Hennig and Sting would make for a most interesting tag team. Both possess punishing finishing moves and—better yet!—each man has the tools to set up the other's finishing move.

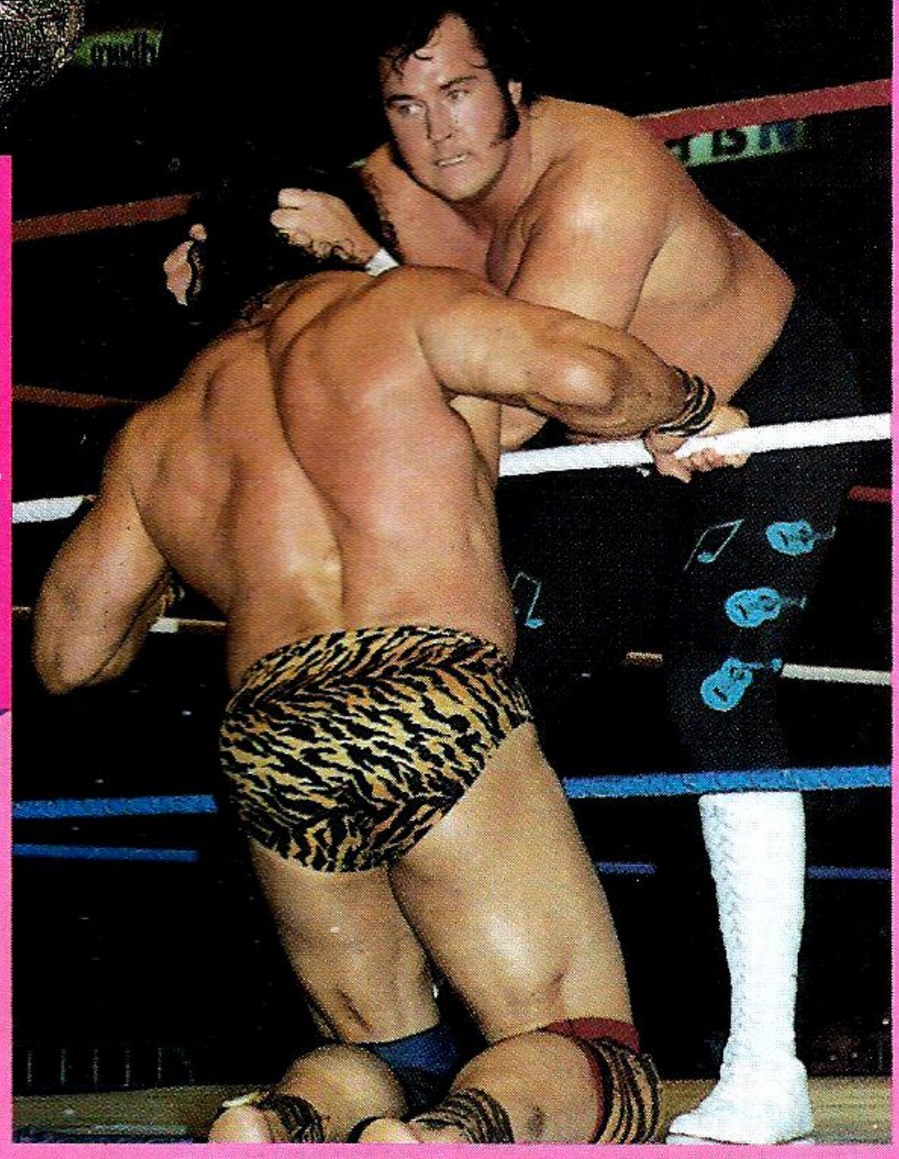
Now somebody just has to get Sting and Hennig together in the same federation. We've done our job.

JOHNNY B. BADD & THE HONKY TONK MAN









Johnny B. Badd (above) and The Honky Tonk Man (right) may sound like a silly tag team, and probably would be. But for entertainment value, they would be tough to beat.

Just imagine: Little Richard and Elvis . . . live . . . on stage . . . in the same wrestling ring. And coming to an arena near you!

Is the thought just too much to bear?

Yeah, we thought so.

Actually, this tag team was dreamed up by Senior Writer Dave Rosenbaum, possibly the only man in the world who has followed Honky Tonk's career from the beginning. But how about Johnny B. Badd? We didn't know Rosenbaum was a Badd man.

"I'm not," Rosenbaum said during the editorial meeting in which we chose our 10 dream teams. "But this is a natural combination. Besides, I think Honky Tonk could teach him a few things."

Ah, Rosenbaum. Poor and misguided. Moses led his people out of bondage and across the desert so that they wouldn't have to worship idols. Was there a Rosenbaum in that pack?

"I'm sure there was," he said. "We were the ones wearing the Walkmans."

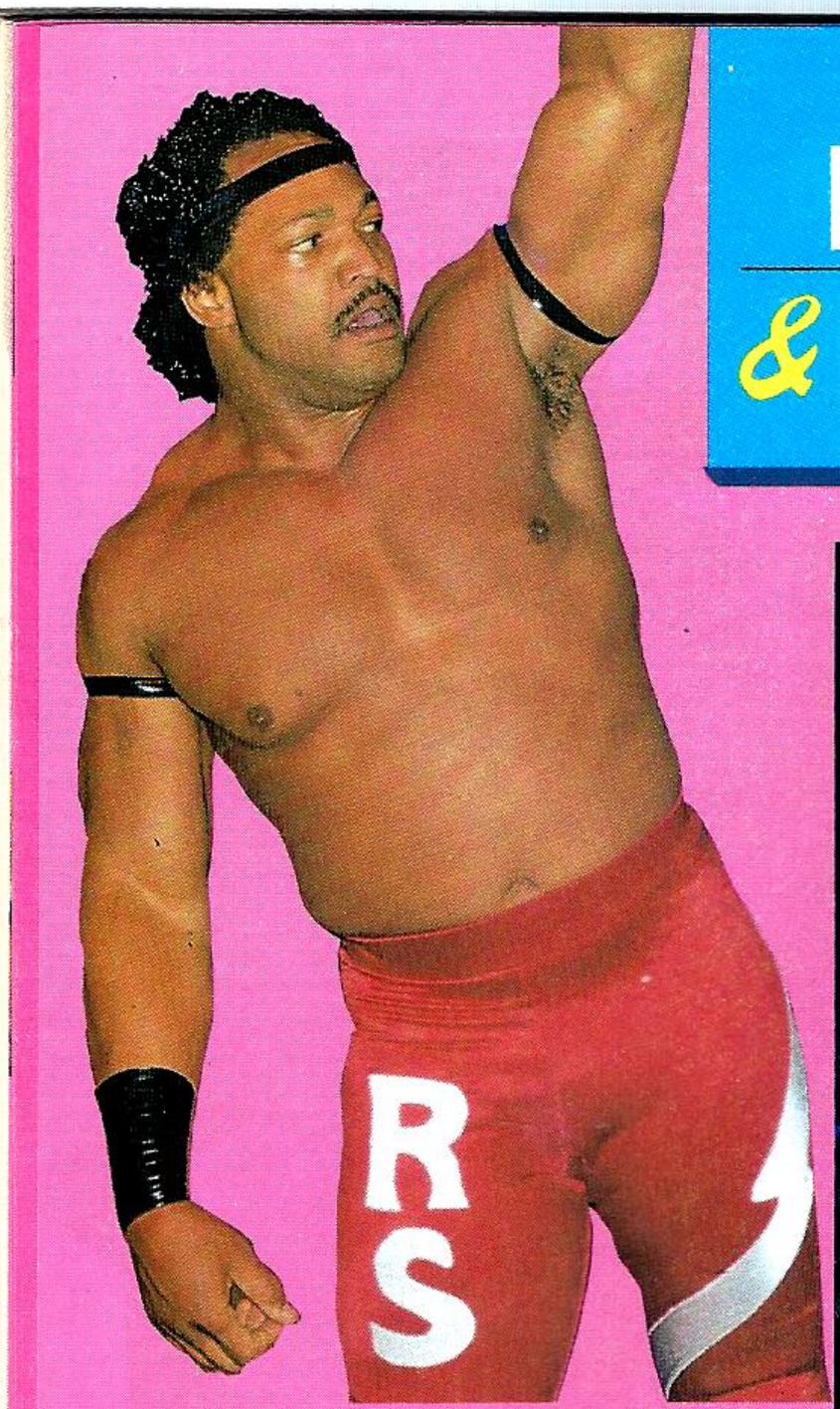
Sweet-talking Johnny, with his love of everything pink, and crazy-talking Honky Tonk, with his long sideburns and love of everything velvet, actually wouldn't make such a bad tag team. Both men—especially Honky Tonk—have overachieved during their careers without getting the proper respect from the fans.

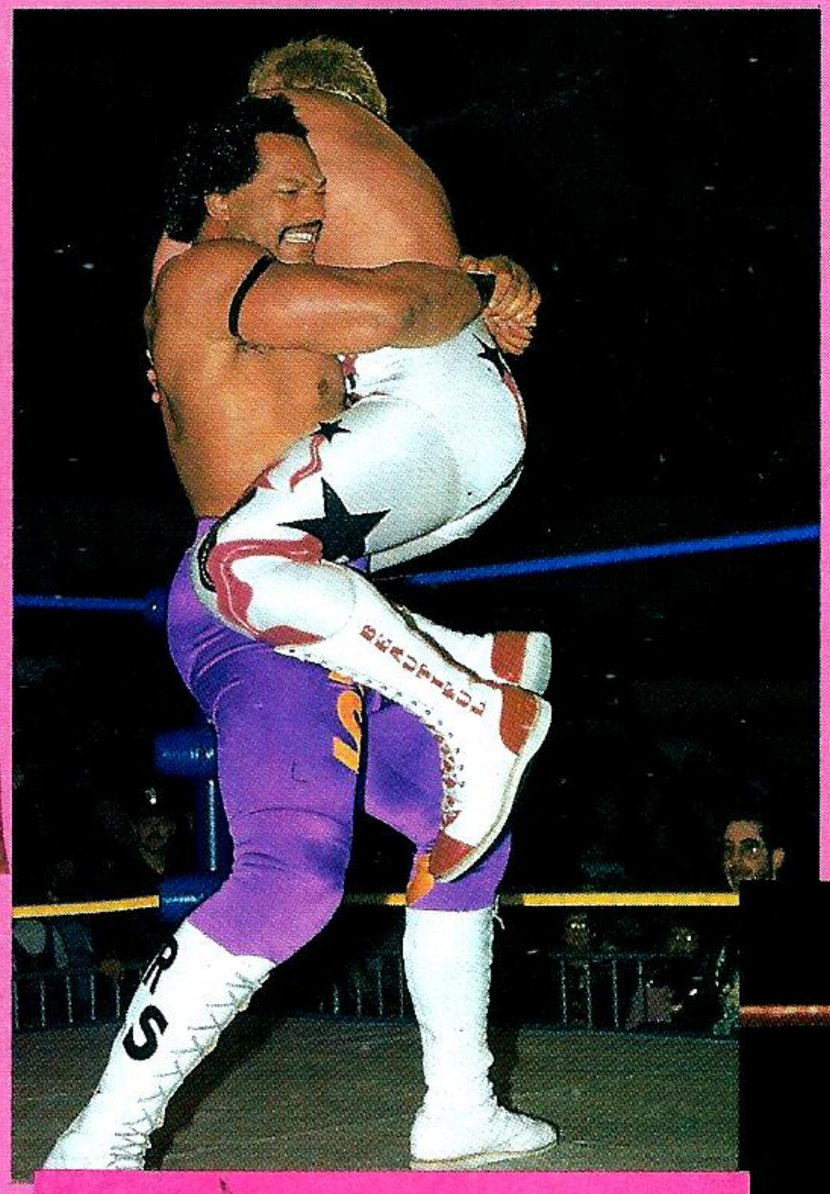
We're not saying a Honky Tonk-Johnny B. Badd duo would win any championships. But they have such an odd image that they'd be able to sneak past unsuspecting tag teams.

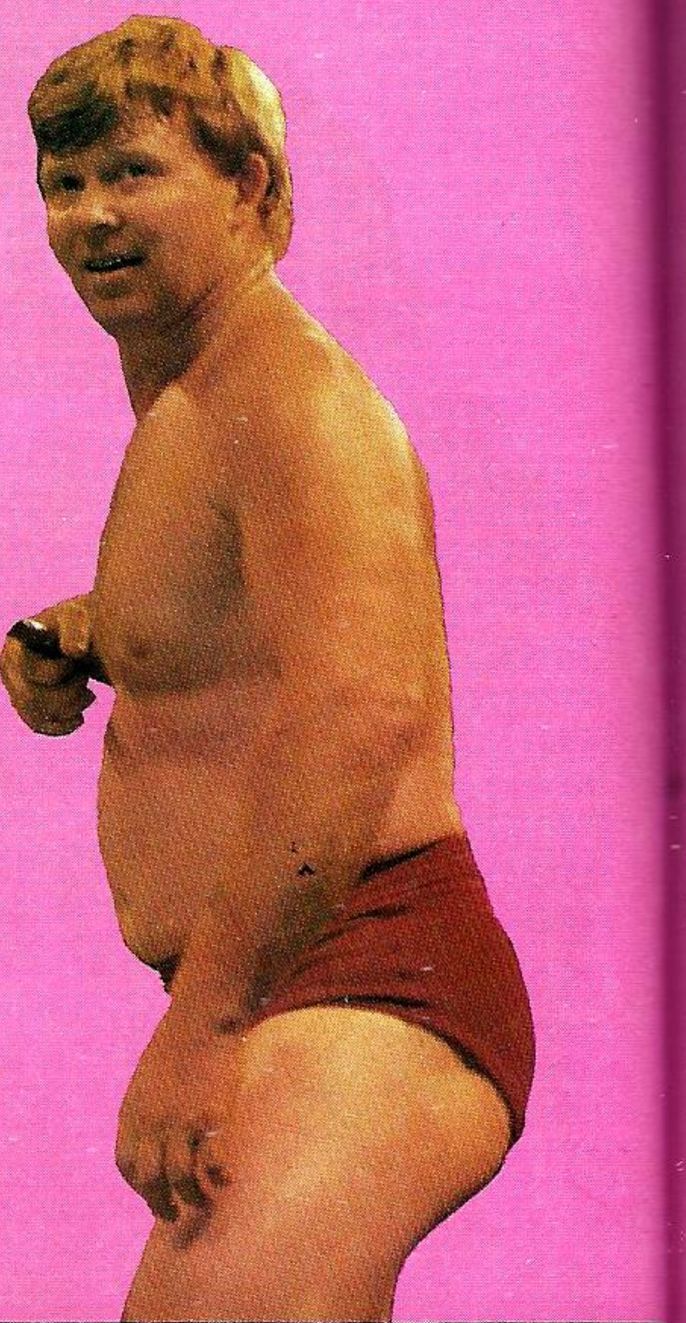
Besides, they'd have great entrance music. And colorful videos. This one isn't about just wrestling, folks.

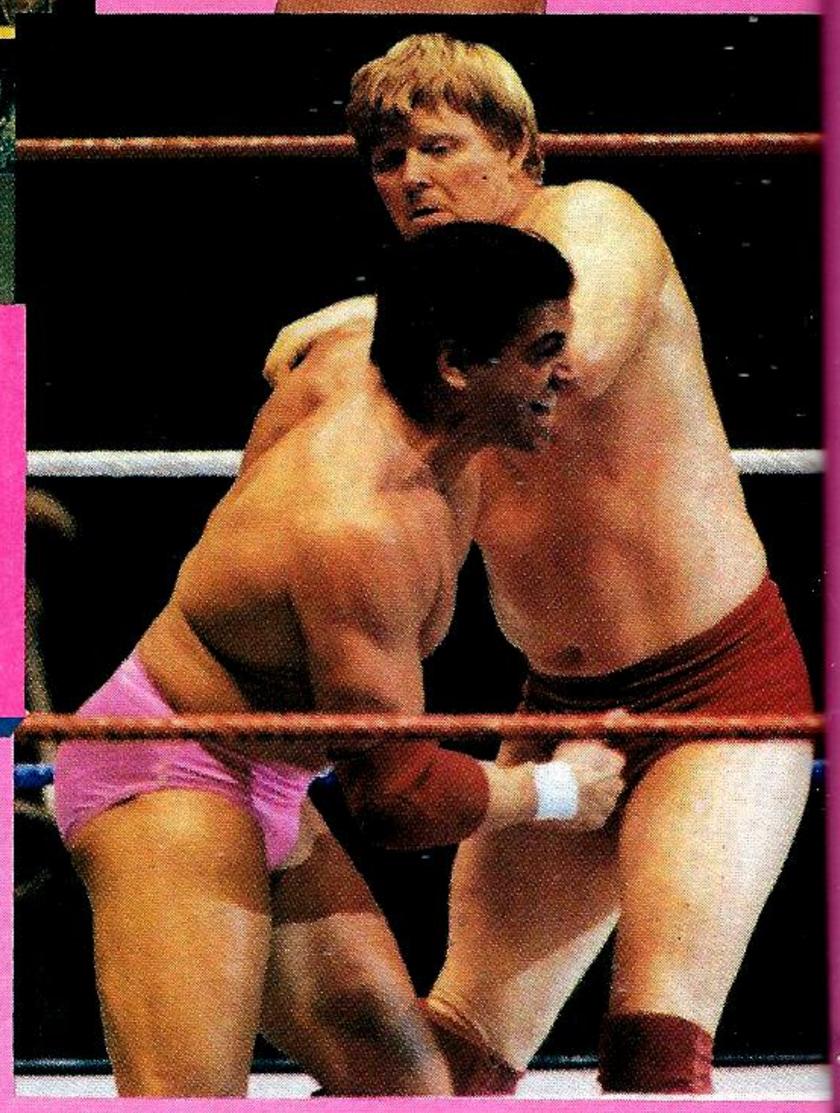
It's about entertainment.

RON SIMMONS & BOB BACKLUND









Ron Simmons (above) and Bob Backlund (right) are both former World champions who excelled in intercollegiate athletics. As a team, they would be outstanding.

The "All-American" and the "All-American Boy." What a pairing! Former WCW World champion Ron Simmons and former WWF World champion Bob Backlund would set a wonderful example for everyone, while winning title after title in straightforward, workmanlike fashion.

There is nothing spectacular about Simmons, a Hall of Fame football player at Florida State. He steadily defies his opponents and his critics with thoughtful strategies and a suprisingingly high level of skill. Simmons is a disciplined young man who found his way on the football field and has transferred his greatest assets to the wrestling ring.

Backlund was the most unflamboyant WWF World champion ever. His recent return to the WWF marked the first time we've seen Backlund do the unexpected. But there has been nothing unusual about Backlund's return. He's still the ol' farm boy with the traditional wrestling trunks and the scientific style.

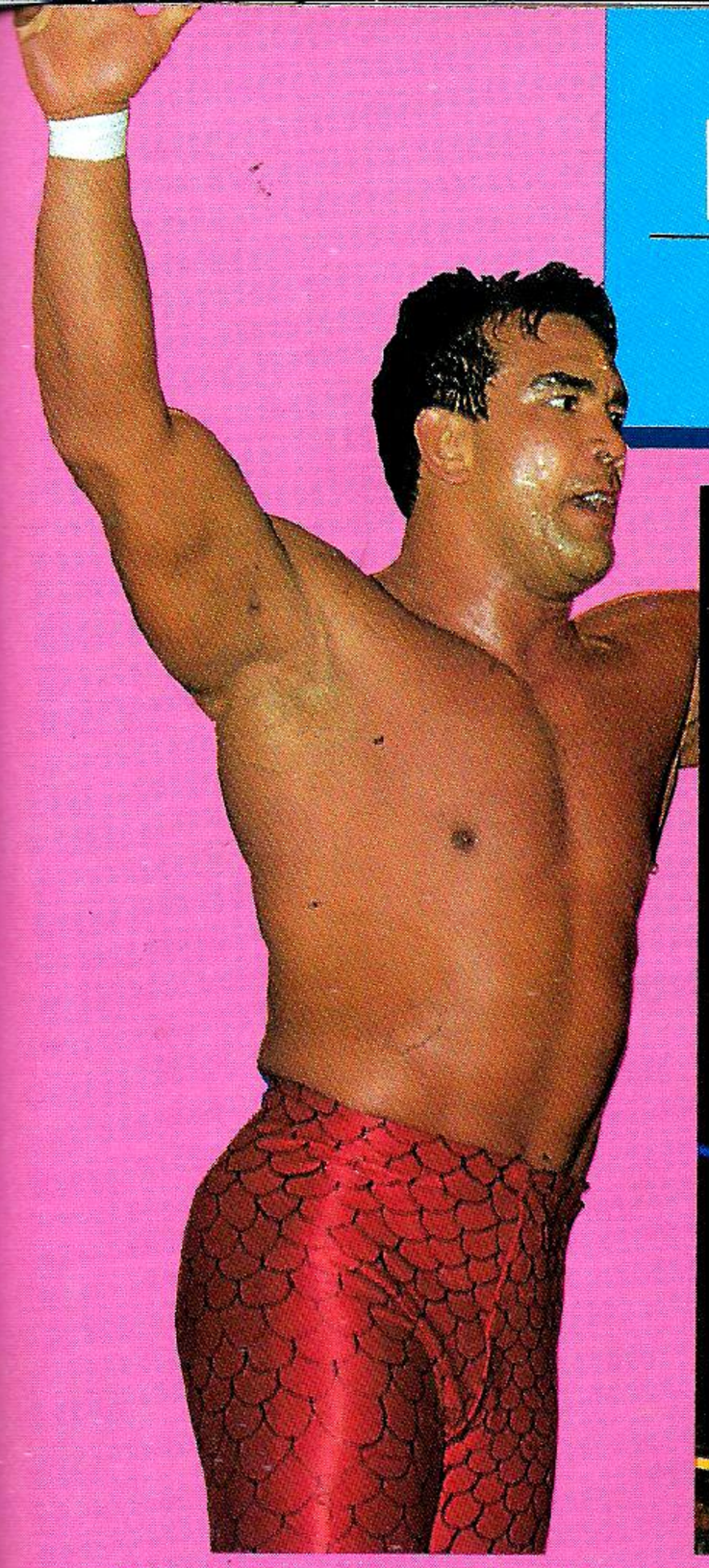
Not too many people could bear Backlund's goody-two-shoes attitude and his refusal to intentionally do anyone wrong. Simmons could. Simmons and Backlund are very similar people.

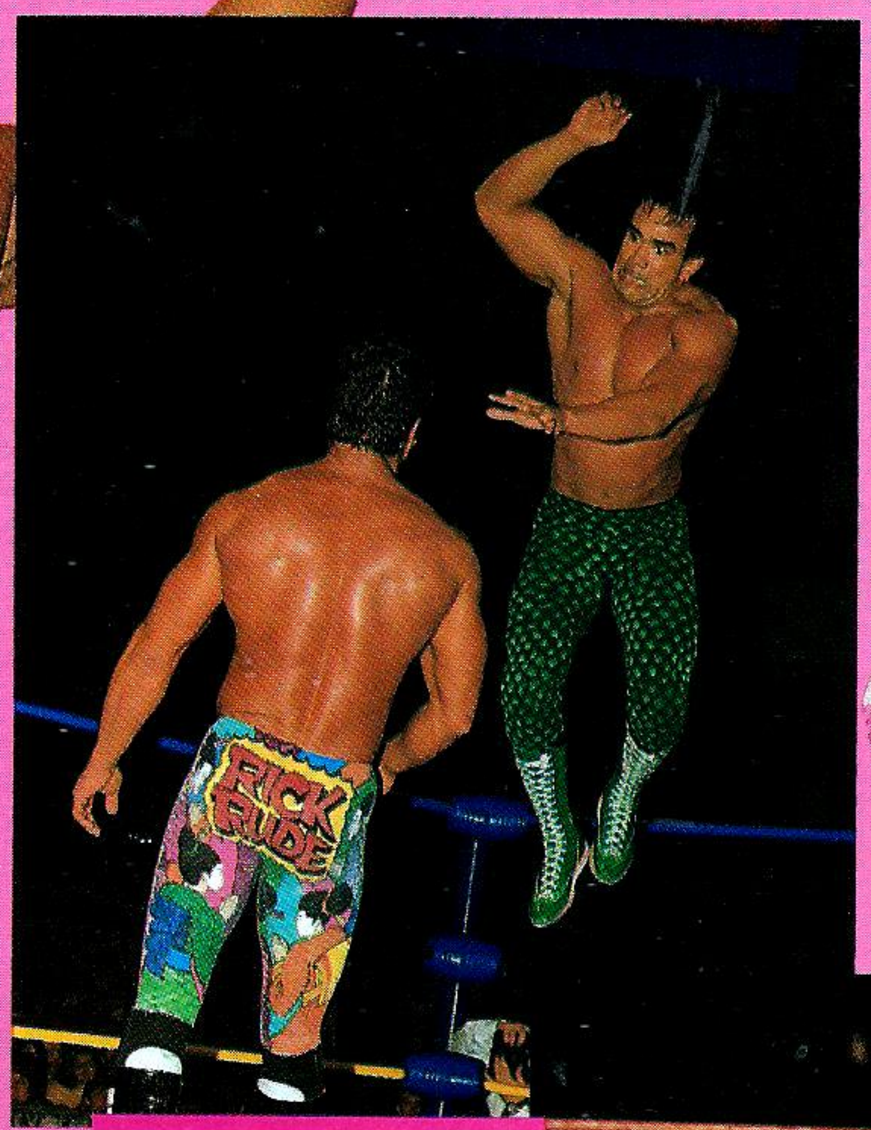
"I've had some pretty strange partners and managers," Simmons said, obviously recalling his days of Doom with Butch Reed and managers Woman and Teddy Long. "I've kind of kept away from tag teams since then because that turned out to be a bad experience. I'd need someone I could trust."

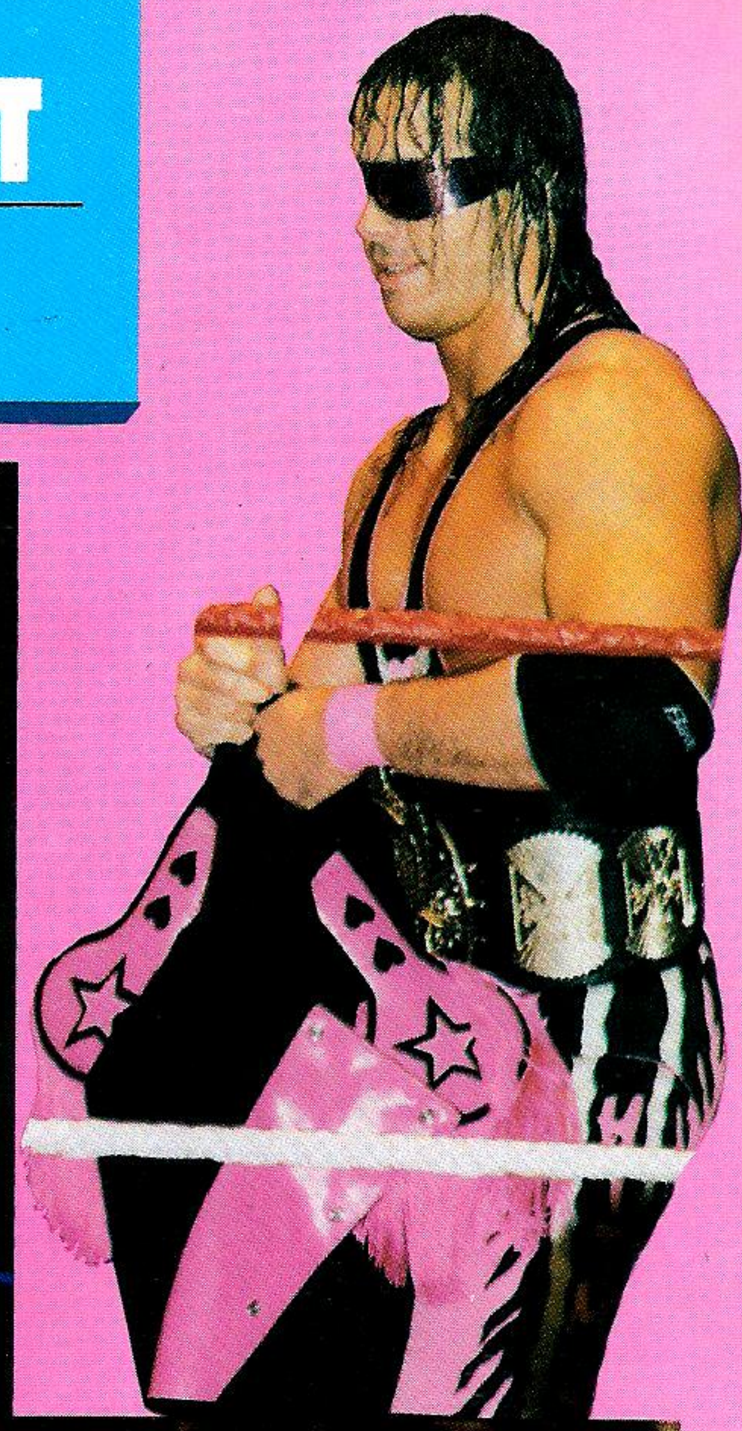
Backlund has never had a steady partner. We really don't know what kind of tag team wrestler he'd be, although there's no reason why his singles skills and dedication shouldn't carry over to tag teams. His one-on, one-off tag team with Pedro Morales beat The Samoans for the WWF World tag team championship in 1980.

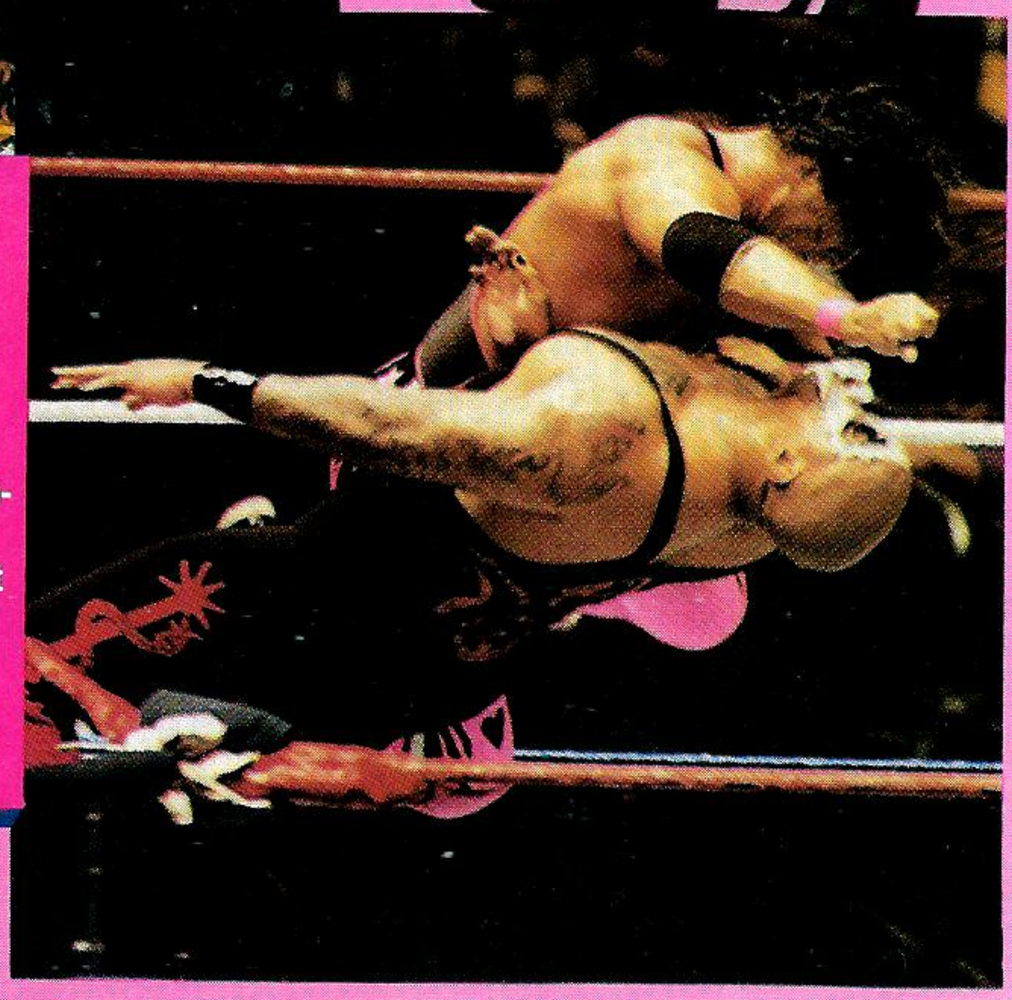
We like the idea of Backlund and Simmons getting a job done without any nonsense. They'd be a refreshing change in the modern tag team picture.

RICK STEAMBOAT & BRET HART









You would be hard-pressed to find a better combination of technical wrestlers than Rick Steamboat (above) and Bret Hart (right). Both possess incredible stamina as well.

Bret "The Hitman" Hart and Rick "The Dragon" Steamboat have more in common than just wonderful nicknames. Here are two of the best-conditioned athletes in the sport. And we're not talking about pure muscle. We're talking about men who could win an Iron Man competition in the morning and wrestle for 60 minutes at night.

Hart has won all three major WWF titles, while Steamboat has won titles in the WWF and WCW. But the moments from their careers we remember best are the times when their stamina was demonstrated in landmark matches.

Hart set a record for stamina in the first Royal Rumble, when he lasted more than 30 minutes against 29 other competitors. Steamboat and Flair once had a magnificent feud in which 60-minute time-limit matches were the norm.

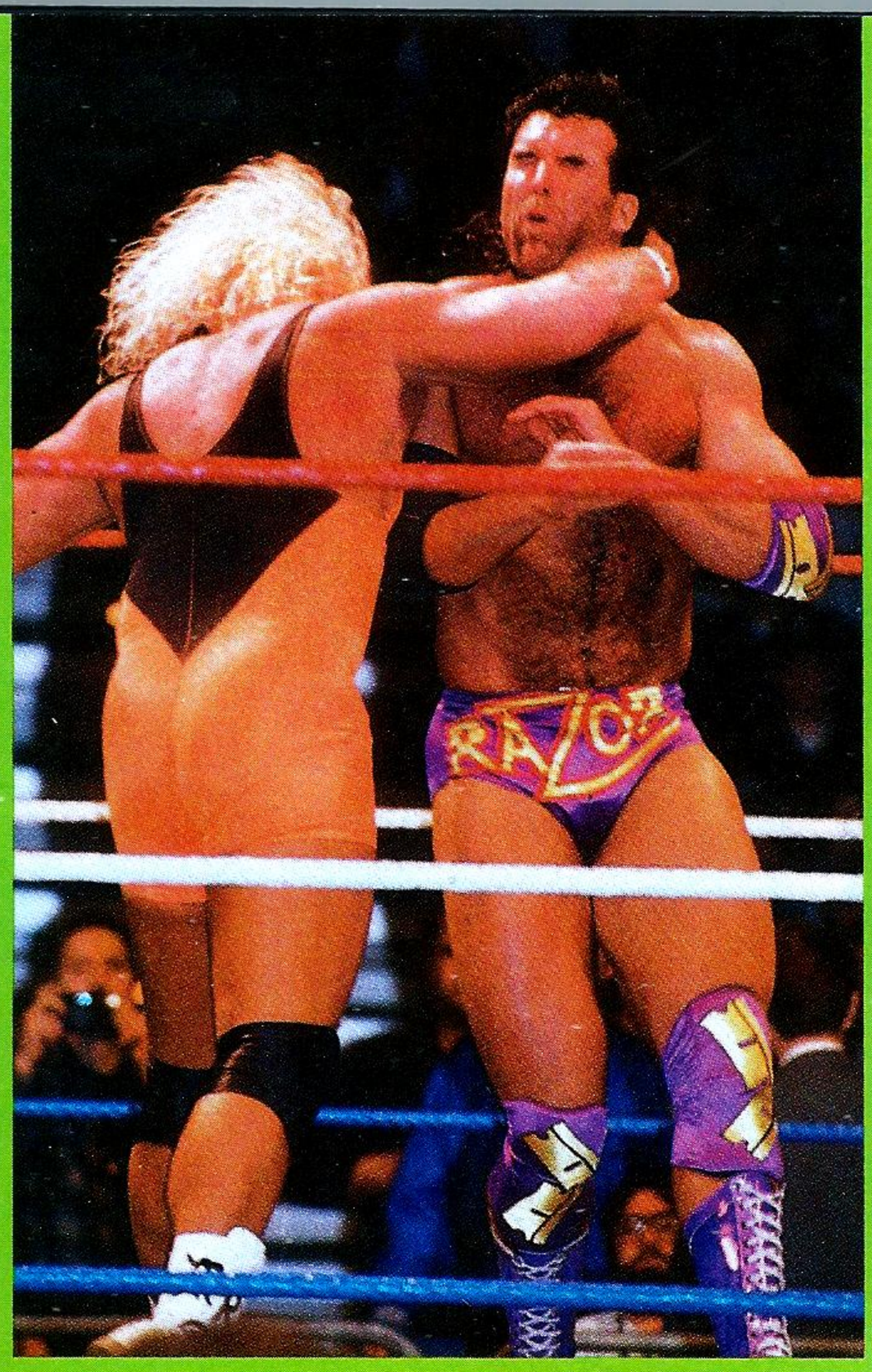
Together, Hart and Steamboat could go after opponents with so much more vigor because the man in the ring would know his partner is full of energy. There'd be no rest for weary opponents. Hart and Steamboat wouldn't want it because they wouldn't need it.

Let's not pass over their skills. Hart is a great scientific wrestler. Steamboat is a master of science and the martial arts. Let's not forget their dedication to clean living. Once Hart broke free of The Hart Foundation, he changed his course in life. Steamboat has always been a family man dedicated to doing things right.

Best of all, both are accomplished tag team wrestlers. There'd be no acclimation period here. Put Hart and Steamboat together and watch them click. Watch the beauty of synchronization. Then get ready to watch them all night long. □

Their WWF feud has only been going on for months, but the bad feelings between Razor Ramon and "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig reach back much further. Taken in that light, it's easy to see why this feud may never end!

By Dave Rosenbaum



Curt Hennig's hatred for Razor Ramon (left) goes back to their days as AWA tag team partners.

Photos by David Fitzgerald

MR. PERFECT VS. RAZOR RAMON: THE UNKNOWN SECRET THAT FUELS THEIR BRUTAL BLOOD FEUD

BOBBY HEENAN AND Ric Flair had been hinting about it for months, but "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig couldn't contain his shock when it actually happened. Actually, Heenan and Flair never asked Hennig for his input, which was the first insult. That they had absolute ignorance of the past was positively abhorrent.

But Hennig kept his mouth shut and played the part of the good soldier. He nodded his head and agreed that Razor Ramon would make a devastating weapon against Randy Savage.

Then, one day last summer, Hennig saw Ramon for the first time in years, caught the look in his eyes, and realized nothing had changed.

They had been friends. They became enemies. And they will always be enemies.

And that was before Ramon ever touched WWF soil!

The secret of the Ramon-Hennig feud will never be revealed on WWF telecasts, where the past is ignored and other federations don't exist. Besides, telling the truth would require telling the world that the thug Ramon was once the scentific Scott Hall. The WWF has no intention of telling that dirty little secret.

It's enough that Hennig knows. Ramon knows. We know. Now, so will you.

Back in 1986, Hennig and Hall were wrestling together as fan favorites in the AWA. They were a highly talented and successful team that went on to win the AWA World tag team title from Jimmy Garvin and Steve Regal.

Their rift began during the latter portions of the title reign. Hall and Hennig began blaming each other for the smallest mistakes. As the challenges to their belts intensified, the strife between Hall and Hennig grew, too.

"They were constantly arguing before matches and then after a match, they were always at each other's throats," said a former AWA wrestler who

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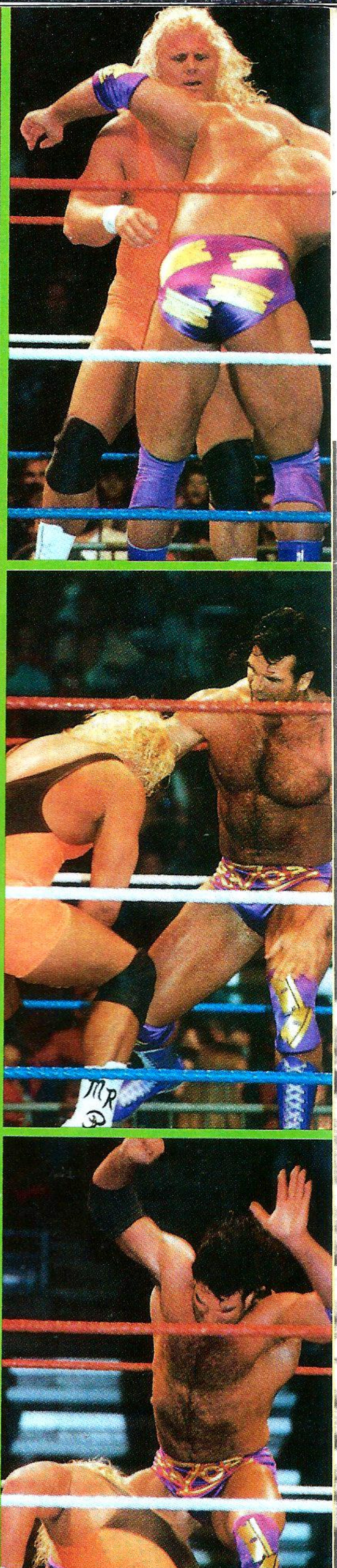
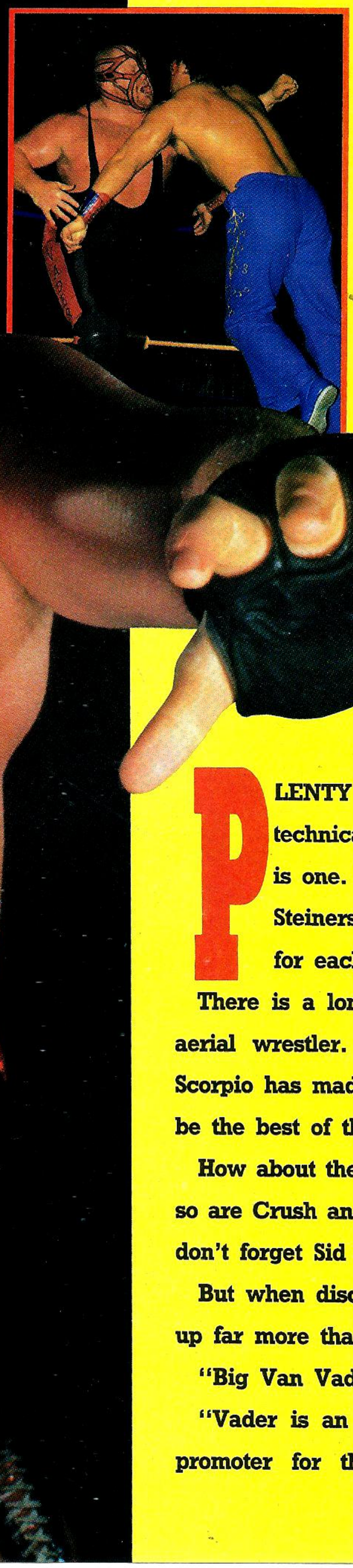


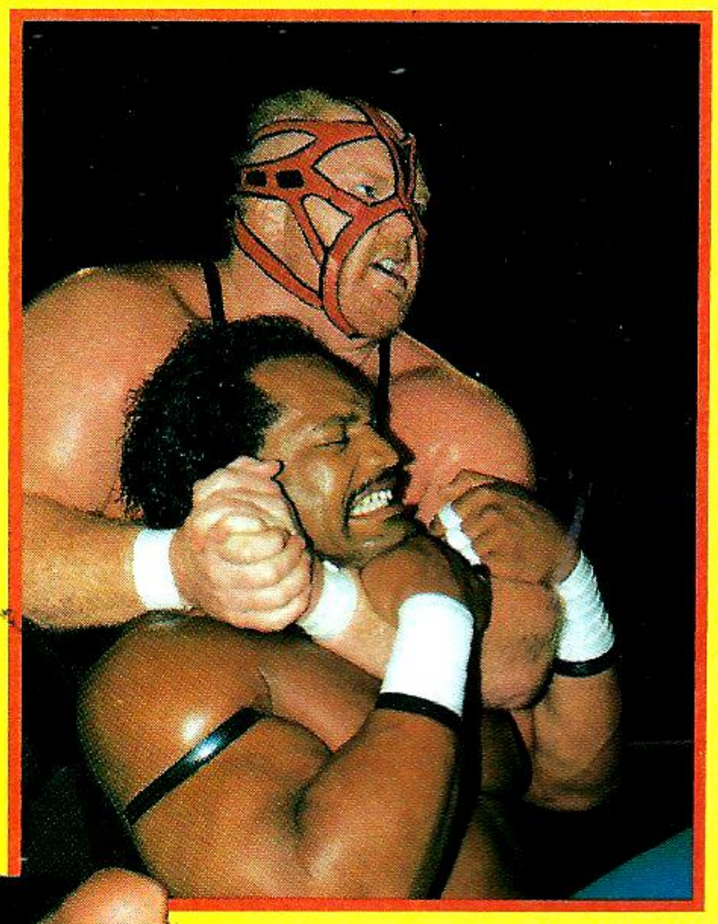
Before Hennig was perfect and Ramon was sharp, they were AWA tag champs (above). In battle, Hennig's technical skill gives him an advantage (top right), but the bigger Ramon has shown Hennig that he is among the best brawlers in the sport (center right and right).

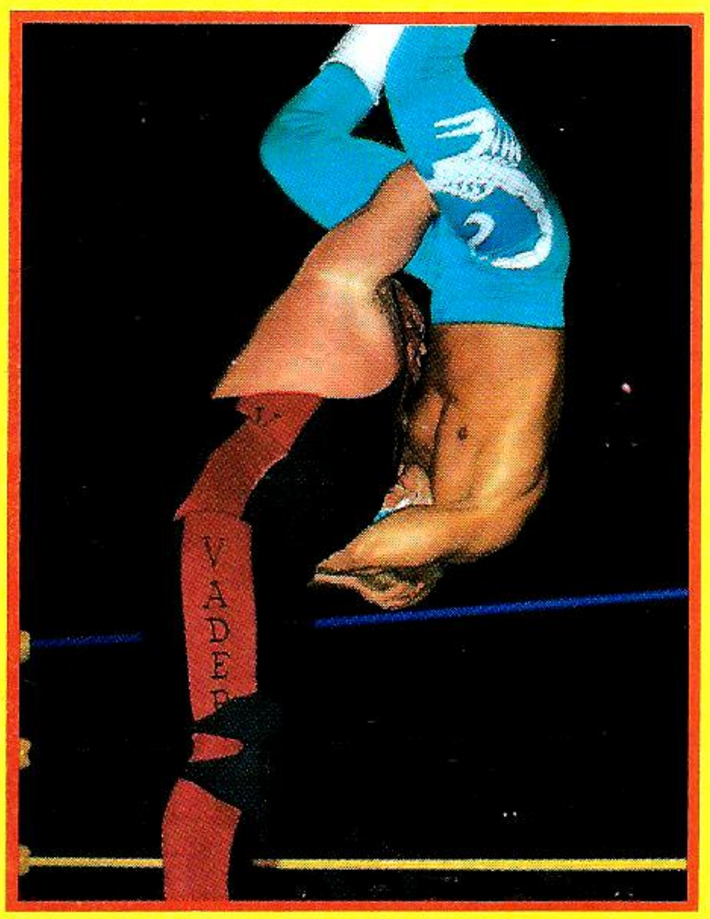
WCW WORLD CHAMPION BIG VAN VADER:

THE MOST FEARED MAN IN WRESTLING TODAY!

In wrestling, where everyone talks tough, one man quiets the crowd with his physical presence, his penchant for power, and his desire for destruction. Big Van Vader has even the bravest fan favorites submitting to his aura







Big Van Vader's repertoire includes clotheslines (left), headlocks (center), and bodyslams (right). But it is destruction potential that makes him a fan favorite's nightmare.

By Chris Bernucca

PLENTY OF NAMES come to mind when discussing the most technically sound man in wrestling. WWF World champion Bret Hart, is one. Sting is another. Bob Backlund. Ric Flair. Rick Steamboat. The Steiners. The list goes on and on, and solid arguments could be made for each man.

There is a long list of men who can lay claim to the unofficial title of best aerial wrestler. Brian Pillman is awesome, but so is Jushin Liger. 2 Cold Scorpio has made an impact in just months in the U.S. And Chris Benoit might be the best of them all. Again, no clear-cut favorite emerges.

How about the strongest wrestler? The Undertaker is among the strongest, but so are Crush and Kamala. Van Hammer may have the strongest right arm. And don't forget Sid Justice—when he's wrestling, of course. Another tough call.

But when discussing the most feared wrestler, there is one name that comes up far more than any other.

"Big Van Vader," said Sting, "strikes the fear of God in young wrestlers."

"Vader is an animal," offered former AWA World champion Otto Wanz, a promoter for the Catch Wrestling Association in Europe. "When he was

(Continued on page 52)

SUPER STAR INTERVIEW

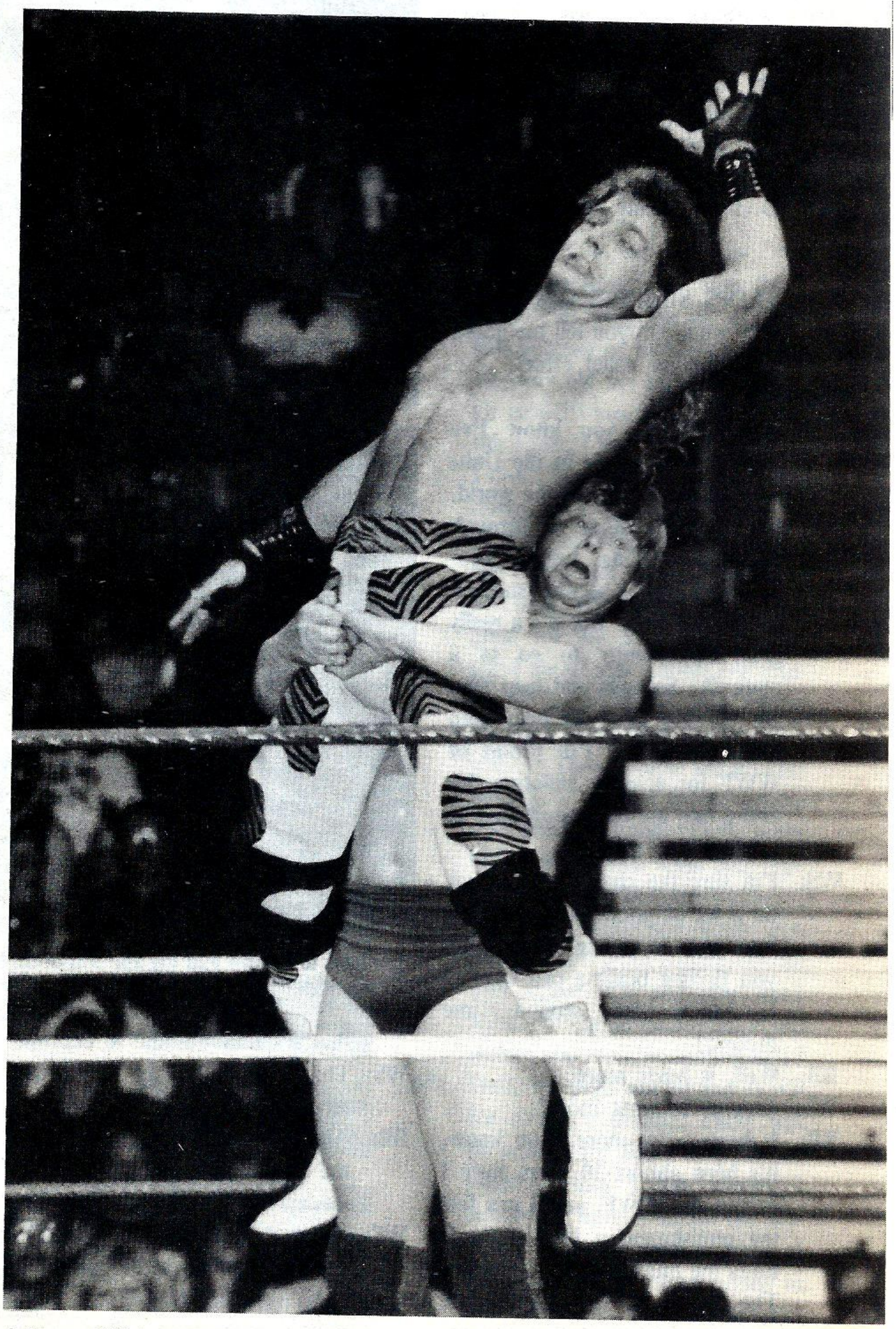
BOB BACKLUND

WHEN FORMER WWF World champion Bob Backlund made his return to the WWF just a few months ago, he was still pretty much an unknown commodity to many younger fans. After all, Backlund was 43 years old—an advanced age by any sport's standards—and he hadn't competed regularly in any federation for more than seven years.

The man who once was known as the "All-American Boy" certainly isn't unknown any longer. His lengthy string of victories over WWF stalwarts such as Rick Martel and Berzerker have fans of the federation buzzing. Even more impressive were Backlund's showings against Intercontinental champion Shawn Michaels. Although the Minnesota native was unable to score a pinfall victory over the "Boy Toy," Backlund gained several wins by countout, making him the top contender for the coveted championship.

To this day, Backlund continues to compete his own way. He remains virtually the only WWF headliner who comes to the ring unaccompanied by theme music. He forsakes violent tactics in favor of the kind of amateur-derived methods that once made him an NCAA champion. And, most of all, he remains soft-spoken and personable, a true contradiction in a federation filled with braggarts and self-loving screamers.

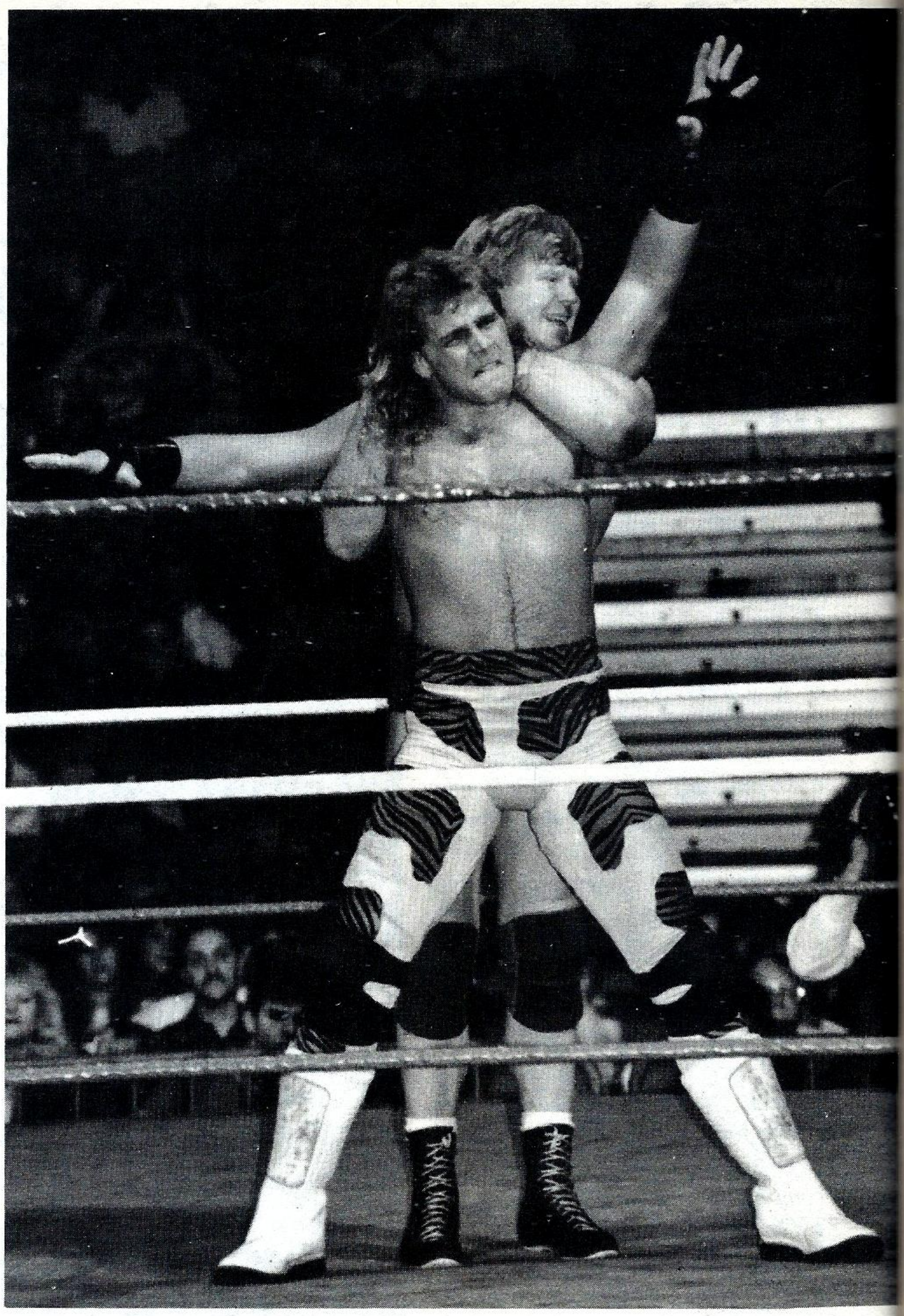
In the past, Backlund has been quite vocal about many policies of the WWF, but more recently, he's been an active part of the federation's charity work. He was present at a press conference announcing that the WWF's January 29 card at New York's Madi-



A former NCAA wrestling champion, Backlund prefers scientific holds to high-risk maneuvers. He is getting older and cannot risk an injury that would curtail his comeback.

son Square Garden would be a benefit for Somalian relief efforts of the American Red Cross. The press conference is where Senior Editor Bill Apter caught up with the former World champion.

"Bob Backlund never changes, and I'm glad he doesn't," reported Apter. "He seemed genuinely pleased about taking part in this worthy cause, but that's Backlund all the way. He's truly humane in every aspect of the word—a caring, sensitive person who happens to be a truly fine wrestler. I hadn't spoken to him in a while, so meeting with him was like visiting an old friend. He looked as fit and trim as ever, and I'd wager that he'd accomplish his current goals very soon."



It is hard to believe that the 242-pound Backlund held the WWF World title for 5½ years. WWF competitors have gotten much bigger, stronger, and faster during his hiatus.

WRESTLING SUPERSTARS: Bob, what can you tell me about this Somalian relief effort?

BOB BACKLUND: **Well, Bill, as you know I've worked with people in the United States and all over the world. I've basically done it through amateur wrestling, helping people develop and become successful in their lives. But it's a really great opportunity to go to a place like Somalia and help people to save lives, to help keep them alive. And I'm proud of WWF for actually initiating this and giving me the opportunity to get involved with it.**

WS: I'm sure the charity efforts will do a lot of good. Now, let's get into your wrestling career. Are you finding being a pro wrestler is harder the second time around?

BB: **Well, it hurts more.**

WS: *(laughs)* It hurts more?

BB: **It hurts a *lot* more. You know, it's been almost 10 years since I was in the WWF, and I can feel the punishment a lot longer. It takes me much longer to recover. The heart is still there. The amount of support that I've received has made me feel so good that it's hard for me to express.**

WS: That's got to be to your advantage.

BB: **And with that, I'm going to have the adrenaline to climb the ladder.**

WS: What about the quality of opposition? That surely has changed. You were wrestling Skinner for quite some time, then Repo Man. Now, they've elevated you to the status of wrestling for the Intercontinental championship against Shawn Michaels, but you haven't come up with the key victory. Do you feel that perhaps it's too soon in your comeback for such high-level matches?

BB: **Oh, I think I'm ready. When I was away from wrestling, I always stayed involved with it as far as working out and training.**

I wasn't spending that much time in the ring, but I've been back in the sport for three or four months now, and have had quite a few matches around the United States. It may not happen tomorrow, but my WWF record is pretty good, and I think I will get to a championship sooner or later. I have a lot of confidence. I'm optimistic about the future.

WS: I can't help but think about a match pitting you against the current WWF World champion, Bret Hart. It would be a match between two consummate wrestlers. It would be a rare occasion for you, since you'd be coming up against someone who can "wrestle" as well as you can: No kicking, no punching, no rule-breaking. How would you plan to go into a match like that?

BB: Very aggressively. Bret's an aggressive individual himself. But there's one thing that I want you to watch when I'm wrestling, and then compare it to others who are wrestling. Count how many mistakes you see me make. How many mistakes does my opponent make? Does he miss things? Does he do things off the top rope? To me, that's dangerous for both people. There's certain things I don't do because I think my chances of getting hurt are just as good as my opponent. And I'll try to wear my opponent down in some manner where I can get to him eventually. It may take me a little longer than somebody else, but I have a goal. In each match, I know where I want to get to.

WS: In your heart, do you feel that you can beat Hart for the belt?

BB: In my heart? I have a lot of pride, and I have a lot of confidence in myself. If he beats me, he's got to be one heck of a man.

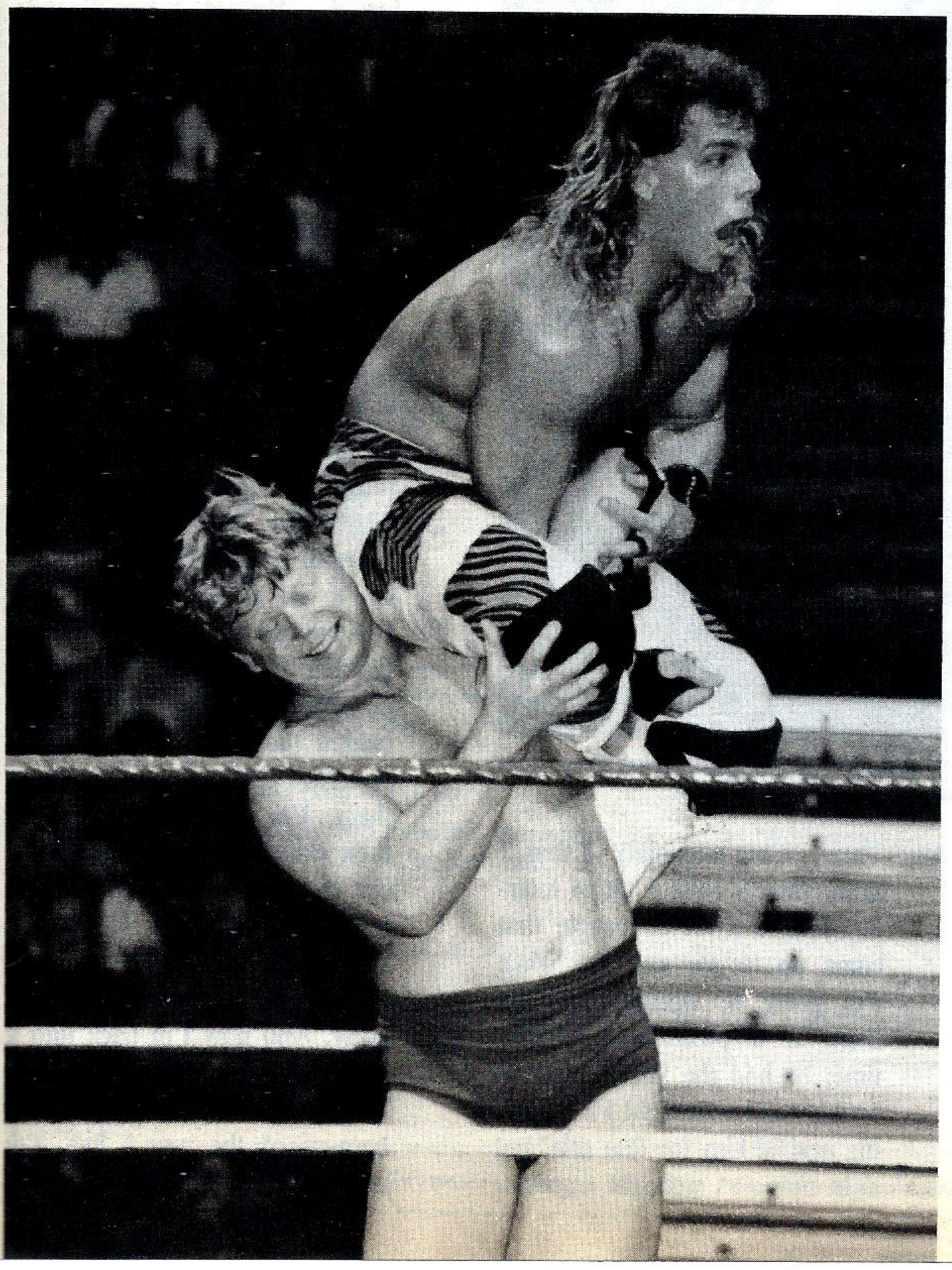
WS: The face of the WWF has changed since your last stint in the WWF. Hulk Hogan has left. The Ultimate Warrior is gone. It's a whole different federation now. How does that suit Bob Backlund?

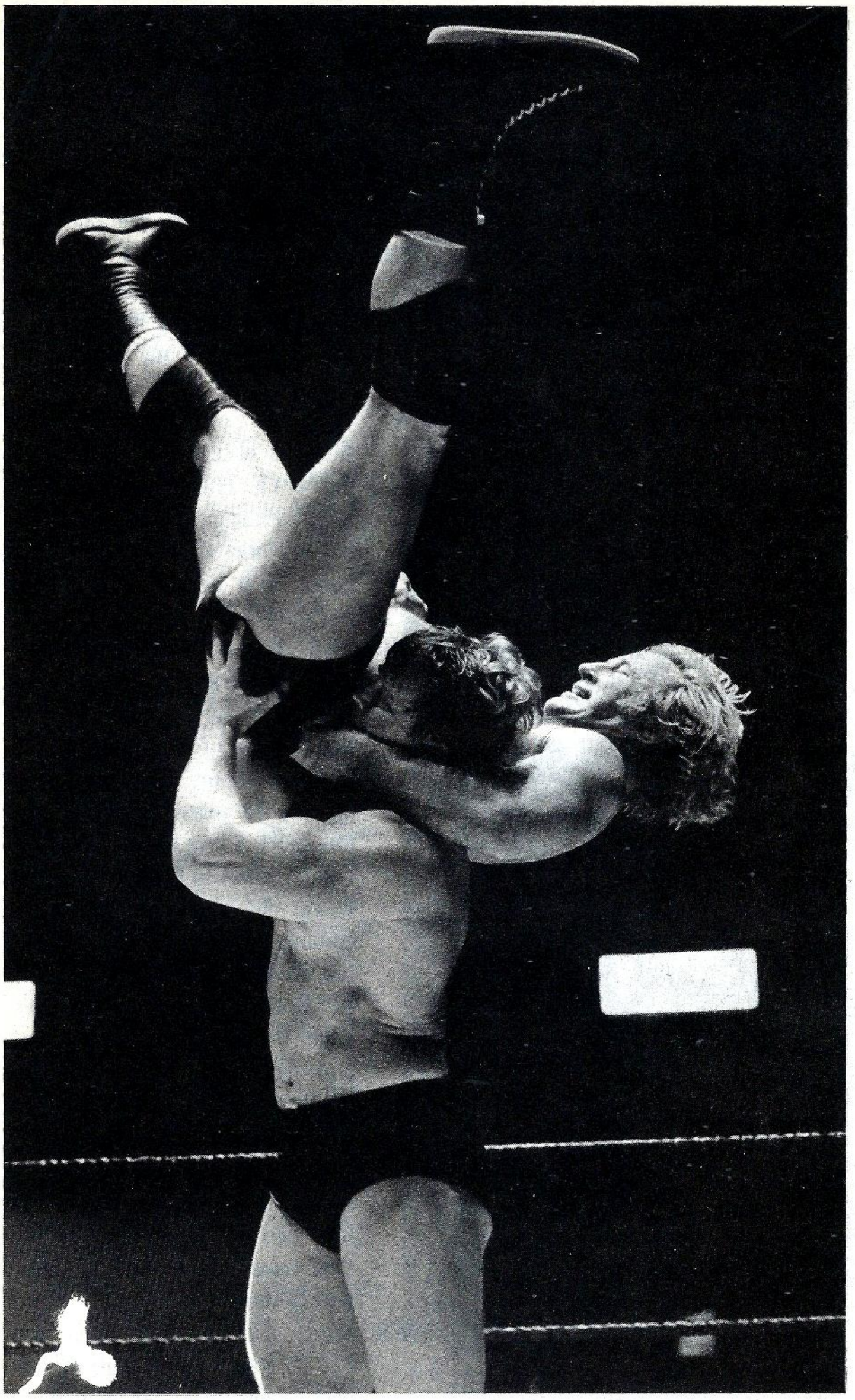
BB: Well, it's a lot different. I'm happy because I *am* Bob Backlund. I'm very proud of that. But because of that pride, it cost 10 years off my career. It wasn't an easy 10 years, because I love this sport. I love what I'm doing. I don't mean to put anybody else down. It's someone wants to conduct himself a certain way, I can't help that. But I'm proud to be Bob Backlund, and that's great for me. It makes me feel good about how people are coming up to me and saying they're having a good time watching me wrestle. Those people are actually sending a message to the people that run wrestling. They make their voices heard when they support someone like me.

WS: Were you surprised when you had to start from square one all over again? Or did you think when you came back that you'd receive title matches immediately?

BB: Well, I'd been out of the WWF for nearly a decade. There was no reason for them to push me right up into a title match. I *wanted* to have to climb the ladder. I never wanted to start at the top. I like to prove myself in whatever I do, especially in professional wrestling. I didn't mind that at all.

After a hiatus of more than seven years, Bob Backlund has returned to the WWF. The "All-American Boy" has come close to defeating Intercontinental champion Shawn Michaels.





As WWF World champion, Backlund wrestled any and all challengers, including those from other federations. In 1979, he took on AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel.

WS: Some of the challengers here are also going after the belt. Ric Flair, a man you're very familiar with, has wrestled Hart a few times already. You've faced him in the NWA when he was champion, and when you were WWF champion. Do you think you'll be facing off against Flair during this stint in the WWF?

BB: There's a big possibility of that. I know there's quite a bit of interest. I have a lot of people that come up to me and ask when I'm going to wrestle Flair. So there is a possibility. At one time, he had the WWF championship, and I thought I'd be going against him for that title, but right now . . . well, the opportunity has yet to come up. But anything can happen!

WS: As an independent observer, are there mistakes that you believe that Flair has been making in trying to regain the title from Hart? Flair has been failing miserably in their rematches.

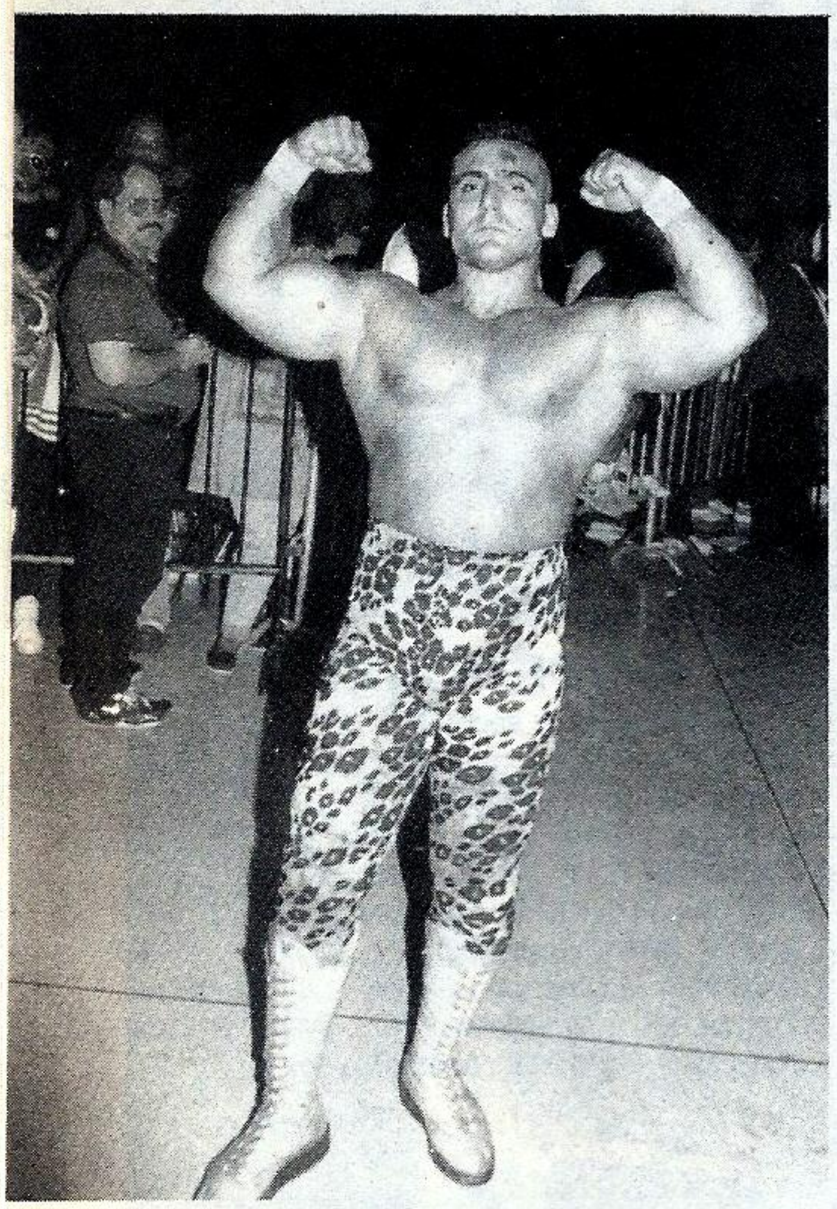
BB: Well, you can never sell Flair short. He's got a lot of moves in his repertoire, and you can never tell what he's going to do in a match. No matter how badly he's behind, there's always a possibility that he can beat a person. And, of course, there's always the possibility that *he* can be beat, but he's very high on the ladder as far as caliber of a wrestler. And at any given time, he can beat Bret Hart. There's a fine line between the two. It's just that Bret Hart has the title right now, and that gives him a big mental advantage.

WS: You should know all about being a champion, Bob. It's been a long time since we've spoken, and I know there must be a lot you'd like to say to your loyal fans—and to the people who have never seen you compete before.

BB: Well, you know, I don't mind if people don't like me, because that's their opinion. I'm proud to be the way I am, and I'm not going to change. But I'm not going to lie to the people, either. I'm not going to be a hypocrite. If I tell them that I don't smoke cigarettes, I'm not going to go behind the scenes and smoke a cigarette. I'm not going to lie to them, I'm not going to lie to their children, and I'm going to live by what I say. And when I left the sport, I felt like I was still a champion because the fans stayed behind me while I was away. And now I'm back into it and I *still* feel like a champion. It's not because of the title, it's because of the way I live. I'm always going to live that way. □

FAN FORUM

(Continued from page 5)



Independent competitors like former ECW champion Johnny Hot Body deserve more coverage, insists reader Taffy Chanel.

Just because a wrestler doesn't compete in huge hockey arenas doesn't mean that he's not a great athlete. Give some people besides Rick Steamboat and Bret Hart some coverage!

TAFFY CHANEL
Pennsauken, NJ

MANIAC NO MORE

I know a lot of fans aren't ready to trust him, but my favorite wrestler in the Global Wrestling Federation is the "Maniac" himself, Mike Davis. I think the guy is hysterical!

Davis recently became a fan favorite, but I have to admit that I've been watching him intently for almost a year now. I mean, any guy who, in the middle of his match, gets confused and takes a seat at ringside is my kind of guy. Sure, he loses his matches by countout, but that's what makes the guy so howlingly funny!

I'll also never forget the time he was launched into the air on a bungee cord, only to come back to earth claiming he'd found a moon rock while on his "adventure." The guy is a scream, and he's so much fun to watch that he keeps my whole family in stiches every week!

TERRY FLANDERS
Burlington, VT

WANTS HER HULK

I don't care what anybody says. I think the WWF has undergone some radical changes since Hulk Hogan left, and the federation is never going to be the same until he comes back.

The WWF will never be the same until the legendary Hulk Hogan returns to the ring, voices reader Mary Irving. She is tired of wrestlers such as Papa Shango and Doink the Clown.

To me, Hulk Hogan *was* the WWF. What is there left to watch now? Papa Shango? Crush? Doink the Clown? Don't make me laugh! The "Hulkster" could've wiped out all those guys in a matter of minutes. Now, with a couple of wimpy champions like Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels, even the flimsiest excuses for rulebreakers—including men such as Skinner and Doink—are allowed to ply their trades and prosper.

C'mon, Hulk. Come back to the WWF and clean house, so I can start enjoying wrestling again!

MARY IRVING
Sarasota, FL

LONE STAR DISGRACE

I'm from Texas, and I'm sick and tired of the way Tex Slazenger and Shanghai Pierce claim they are the "only real Texans" in WCW. Those guys are the worst things ever to disgrace our state!

I couldn't believe it when they combined to hang "Diamond" Dallas Page over the top rope with a bullrope. Both of those goons should've been banned from WCW when they did that, but instead their reign of terror continues.

Frankly, I think Pierce is an okay wrestler, but Slazenger is a big, out-of-shape loudmouth who needs a good butt-kicking. I hope Tom Zenk and Johnny Gunn send those apes packing from the federation for good!

TIMOTHY HARON
Ft. Worth, TX □

PERFECT vs. RAMON

(Continued from page 38)

knew both men, and therefore requested anonymity. "I remember Hennig once saying to Hall, 'You do that one more time and our belts are history. We got damn lucky this time.' Hennig was by far the better wrestler, and he knew it."

It didn't matter who was better when they lost the belts during one of the most bizarre episodes in AWA history. Buddy Rose and Doug Somers, a slow, overrated team which that took advantage of the AWA's talent weakness and became contenders to the tag belts, defeated Hall and Hennig by countout.

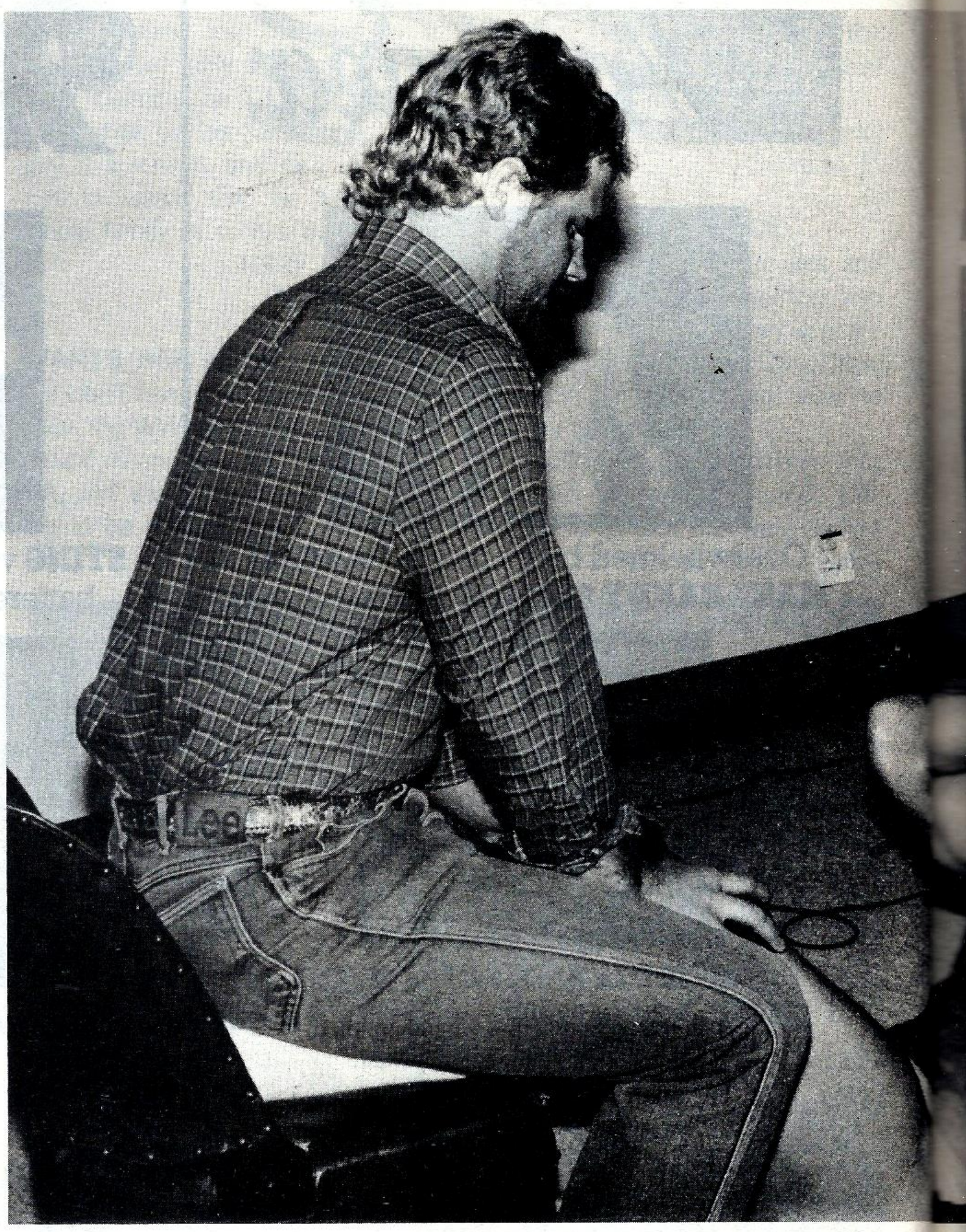
Actually, Hall got counted out after interference by Col. DeBeers. Still, Hennig was irate that Hall allowed himself to be distracted and attacked.

The worst was yet to come.

"Stanley Blackburn, the AWA president at the time, was known to make some incredible decisions, and this one might have been the worst of all," our former wrestler

Recently, Hennig has gotten a leg up on Ramon, but this feud will last a long time.

recalled. "Titles weren't supposed to change hands on countouts, but that one did. They took the belts away from Hennig and Hall and



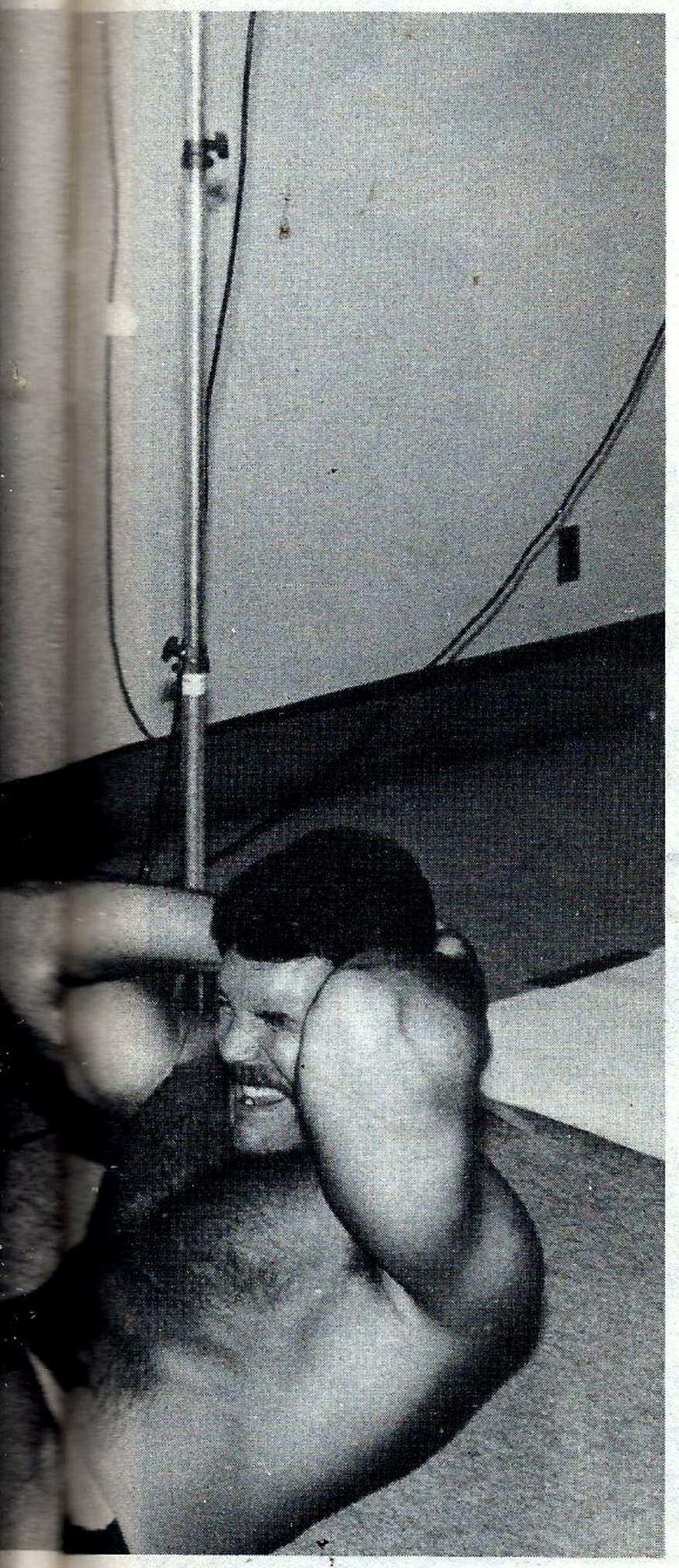
gave them to Rose and Somers. Just like that. No explanation. It was almost like a title coup."

No onle knows for sure what was on people's minds at that point. Some experts believe Hennig suspected that Hall arranged with Blackburn for the title loss. What *was* reported is that Hennig and Hall almost came to blows in the dressing room a few days later, and didn't speak to each other for weeks. Finally, Hennig called Hall and let him know their partnership was over. It was, according to sources, a mean-spirited conversation during which each man expressed his true feelings of hatred for the other.

Imagine. They had been teammates. Their split was permanent. Hall and Hennig never spoke to each other again.

Until last summer, that is. Hall entered the WWF dressed as Razor Ramon. and Hennig didn't know what to do. "Mr. Perfect" was in a quandary. His decision was to let

As AWA tag team champions in 1986, Hennig and Ramon (then Scott Hall) did everything together, including work out.



bygones be bygones and give Hall/Ramon a second chance.

It didn't work. Although there was never a specific incident which refueled the Ramon-Hennig feud, seemingly small events brought back all of the old feelings of hate.

Ramon would disagree with Hennig at meetings with Heenan and Flair. Hennig would subtly belittle Ramon. All along, Heenan and Flair had no knowledge of the Ramon-Hennig past beyond the fact that they had been a tag team. If they did, they kept their mouths closed.

Several insiders have insisted that Savage's offer to Hennig gave Mr. Perfect the opening he needed. Hennig was desperate to get away from Ramon and grabbed the opportunity when Savage asked him to be his teammate at The Survivor Series.

With Flair and Ramon as their opponents, it was the perfect offer.

"Hennig hemmed and hawed to make it look good, but he didn't even have to think twice about saying yes to Savage," a WWF insider revealed. "It was what he had been waiting for."

To the uninformed WWF viewer, the Hennig-Ramon feud is based on recent WWF events. Hennig supposedly backstabbed Ramon, Heenan, and Flair and Ramon is getting revenge for all of them. Ramon is part of the group that laughed at Hennig, and Hennig is getting his chance to laugh back.

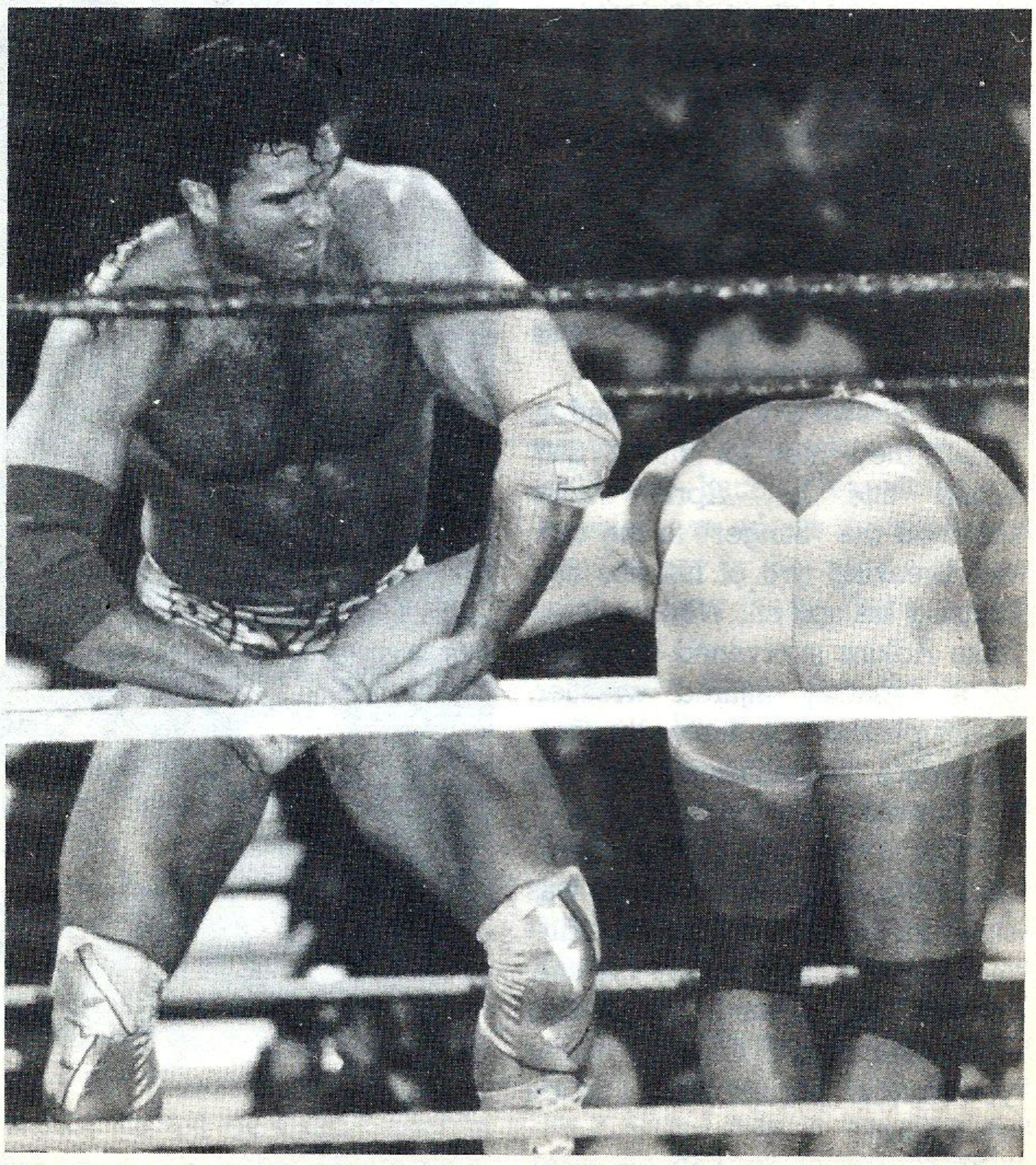
To the wrestling historian, the Hennig-Ramon feud is an extension of what was started but never completed in the AWA seven years ago. Taken in that light, the Hennig-Ramon feud is far more intense than anyone realizes.

Remember: After losing the title and breaking up, Hennig and Hall never met in the ring. They never even talked to each other, except for that one phone call. The bad feelings were left to linger for ears until Ramon returned to the WWF.

Lingering hatred doesn't go away. It builds.

The Ramon-Hennig feud isn't about betrayal. It's a blood feud that is bound to go on for a long time.

Maybe *another* seven years. □



When Ramon arrived in the WWF, Hennig was not happy that the two would be part of the same stable. The former I-C champion tried to forget the past, but found he could not.

BIG VAN VADER

(Continued from page 41)

champion over here, we couldn't get anyone to wrestle him."

"When he used to come to ringside with that big ugly mask, fans were literally shrieking," said Tony Halme, an American star in Japan. "Some photographers wouldn't go near him."

"It's Vader," answered 2 Cold Scorpio. "I know the man from our days in Colorado, and I've always been somewhat wary of him. How would you feel about wrestling someone twice your size?"

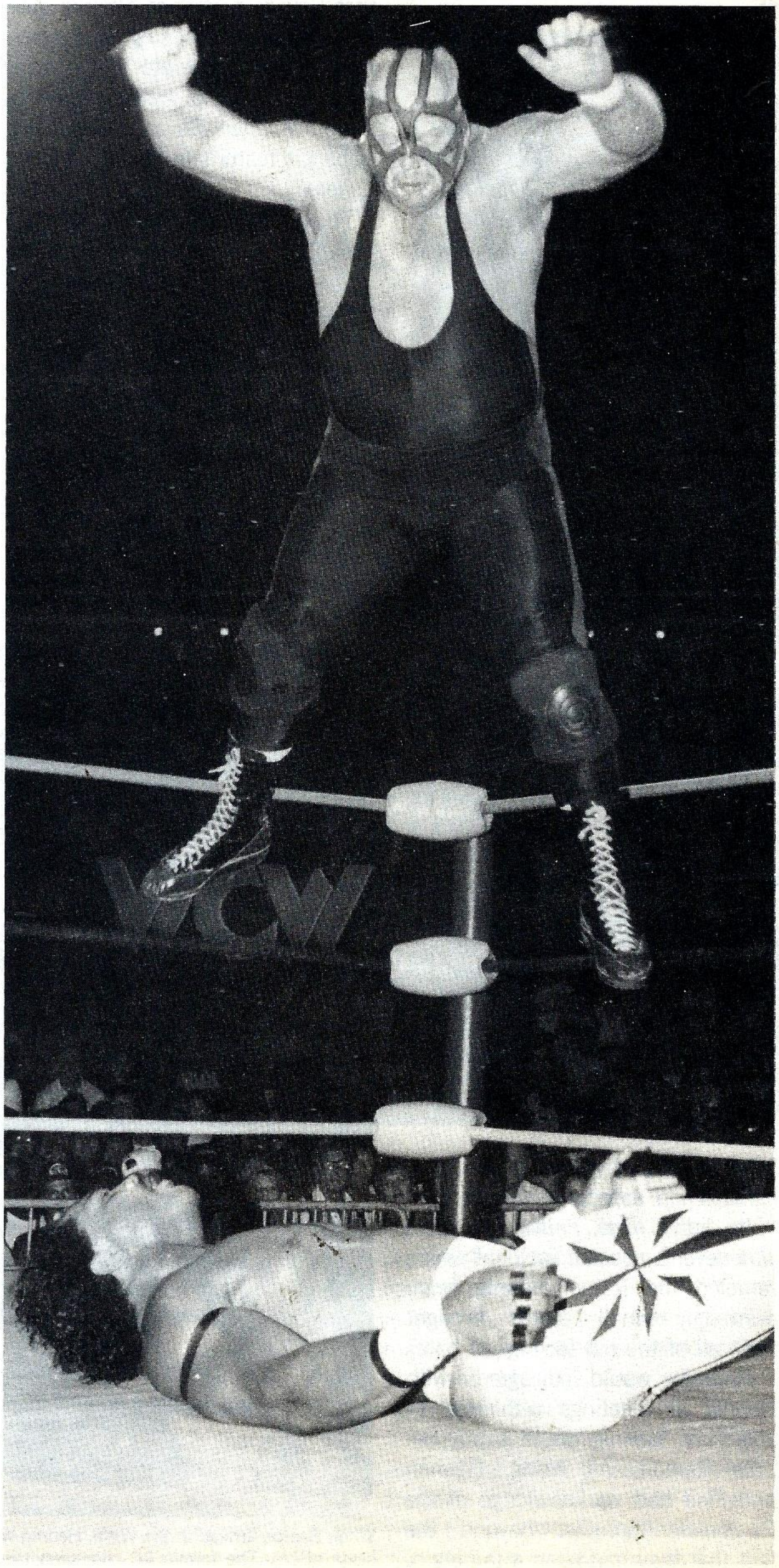
There is no denying that Vader, who demolished Ron Simmons on December 30 in Baltimore, Maryland, to regain the WCW World title, is an imposing specimen. He stands 6'5" and is a barrel-chested 405 pounds, which makes him the biggest wrestler in the federation.

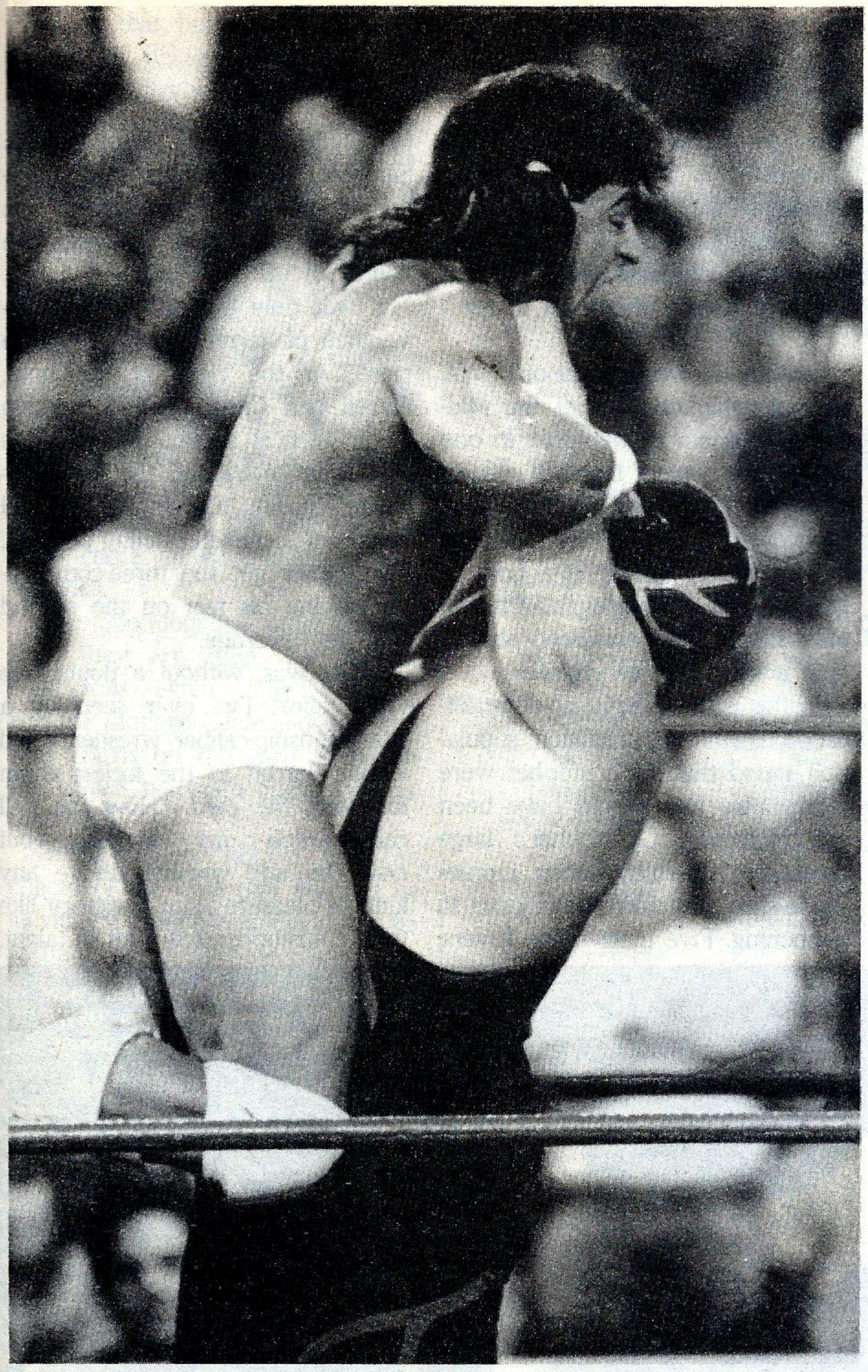
But it is more than size that inspires awe in Vader's opponents. It is his international reputation. It is his apparent imperviousness to pain. And it is the way he cuts down foes with a swath of destruction not seen since 1991, when a rulebreaking Undertaker was putting foes in body bags.

Sting knows a bit about Vader. When they met for the WCW World title last April, Vader slammed the "Stinger" to the canvas, breaking two of his ribs and bruising his spleen. When referee Mike Adkins intervened on behalf of a seriously injured wrestler, Vader pushed him across the ring, drawing a disqualification that cost him an easy title victory.

"That's what got my attention," said Sting. "All he had to do was sit on me to win the title. I couldn't move, and I could barely breathe. Instead, he pushed Mike. That kind of irrational thinking makes you wonder who, or what, you are up against."

Most opponents of Vader usually find their shoulders up against





A splash from the 405-pound Vader can flatten an opponent as tough as Ron Simmons (opposite). Tom Zenk screams in pain as Vader lifts him skyward—by the head (above).

the mat. Joe Thurman was no exception, although Thurman couldn't actually feel his shoulders touching the mat. In fact, Thurman couldn't feel much of anything. At a TV taping in October, Vader finished off Thurman with a crushing power bomb that broke the preliminary wrestler's back.

"The card had gone very well to that point," recalled WCW broadcaster Tony Schiavone. "But when Thurman's head was immobilized and he was wheeled out on a stretcher, a pall came over both locker rooms. There was such a finality to the whole thing. Everything got real quiet, like a wake. It was scary."

Vader doesn't scare everyone. Sting has overcome his initial fear of him, having defeated Vader in the "King Of Cable" tournament final at Starrcade. Simmons admits he is frustrated by Vader but maintains he is not scared of the former NFL lineman.

"You hit him with all you've got, and he doesn't move," said Simmons. "I mean, *he doesn't move*. He has very few weak spots. I'm tellin' you, he's no joke. He's the real deal, and anyone who doesn't think so is headed for the hospital."

Vader is unaware of his unofficial title as most feared wrestler. He is far more concerned with his official title—that of WCW World champion.

"I'd rather be most feared than most cheered," Vader said. "But get this straight: I'm not out there to satisfy anyone's agenda except my own. If I strike fear in opponents, fine. If I don't, that's fine, too. I'm not gonna wrestle any differently. I'm gonna keep on playing the pain game, because it's the one I play best."

Vader's manager is Harley Race, a seven-time former NWA champion who knows a little bit about the mental aspect of the sport. He believes that Vader's federation intimidation is his most powerful weapon.

"Wrestling is a sport where everyone in the ring thinks they are the best, or strongest, or whatever," said Race. "No successful wrestler ever admits to themselves that the guy in the other corner is tougher than them. That's a sure sign of defeat.

"But my Vader does that to opponents. Some guy won't be able to look him in the eye. Or someone else will wrestle back on his heels. There's no doubt he's the most feared man in the sport, and that is why he's going to be World champion for as long as he wants."

The WCW World title is one that may come and go, but the most feared man in wrestling is a title Vader will have for quite some time. □

GRAPEVINE

(Continued from page 6)

ter than ever, and the tag team ratings continually show us as one of the best teams around. If Eaton wants to join our cause, I'll welcome him with open arms. But if he tries to meddle in our affairs, well, it's going to be some pretty strange times in these parts, boys."

Amazingly, Cornette, the usually unflappable extrovert, was unavailable for comment. Just as remarkably, Lane was very tight-lipped about the impending debut of Eaton.

"Bobby Eaton is one of the premier grapplers of this or any other era," Lane told reporters. "He should be very, very successful here in SMW." Lane refused to answer questions about a Bodies/Express merger.

Wrestling Superstars' Smoky Mountain correspondent Bill Needham reported that he had overheard part of a telephone conversation in which Cornette was apparently in negotiations with a wrestler.

"I asked Cornette if that was Eaton on the phone," said Needham, "and we waved his racket at me."

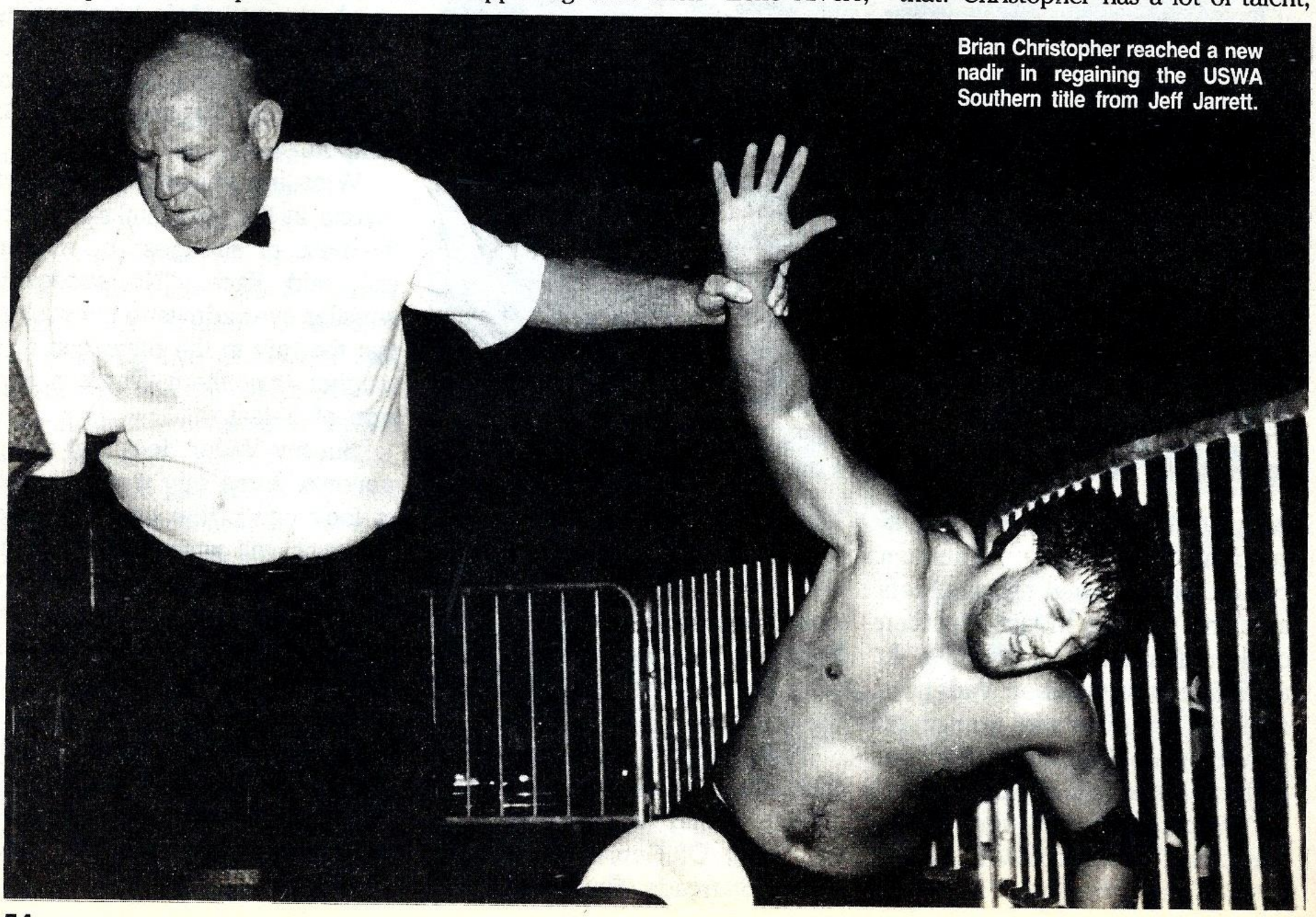
***

January 11 was a night of USWA championship changes at the Mid-South Coliseum in Memphis. In one of the most violent matches seen in the arena in months, mouthy Brian Christopher regained the Southern title from Jeff Jarrett in a bout in which even the arrogant Christopher should not have been able to take a smidgeon of pride.

In this no-time limit, no-disqualification match, a prematch stipulation stated that if Christopher were pinned, his hair would have been cut. However, Christopher's large contingent of rulebreaking cronies made sure that didn't come close to happening. Five men—Zeke Rivers, Mr. Clyde, Master of Terror II, Mike Samples, and manager Bert Prentice—continually interfered on Christopher's behalf during the course of the wild bout.

It was only the skills and perseverance of Jarrett kept the match close. At the close of the bout, Jarrett had Christopher in position for a vertical suplex, but Samples and Prentice tripped the blond favorite, causing Christopher to land on top of Jarrett in pinning position. Christopher got the three-count after placing his feet on the second rope for leverage.

"That was, without a doubt, the worst effort I've ever seen by a championship-caliber wrestler," said a livid Jarrett in the locker room following the card. "How the hell can—pardon my language—but how can any wrestler derive any kind of pleasure from a victory like that? Christopher has a lot of talent,



Brian Christopher reached a new nadir in regaining the USWA Southern title from Jeff Jarrett.

I'll admit that, but he never displays it. Instead, he lets a couple of no-talent fat boys win his matches for him. Amazing, it's just amazing. This is one case where the no-disqualification rule worked against me, to be sure."

Christopher acted as if there was nothing shady about his victory at all.

"It's just the result of studying your simpleton opponent and planning accordingly," he snickered. "That towhead Jarrett is as yellow as his hair. He's a boy playing a man's game—and the real men always come up with championship victories."

The Moondogs are more animals than they are men, but they're champions again. The suddenly popular mongrels defeated Ron and Don Harris on the card to regain the USWA tag team championship, their fifth.

"Believe it or not, it was the cheers of the fans that inspired us to victory," said Moondogs manager Richard Lee. "We're dedicating this big win to our fans our there. We love ya all!"

Come again?

***

In a most unlikely comeback story, The Dynamite Kid has resumed his grappling career. Kid, who retired in 1991 after a series of injuries, made his return on January 7 in Bristol in England, defeating Tony Rudge and winning a 10-man battle royal. The latter victory automatically made Kid the top contender for Dave "Fit" Finlay's CWA Intercontinental title, but Kid insists he's taking his comeback one step at a time.

"It was a nice first day back, but I'm not at 100 percent yet," said Kid, Davey Boy Smith's former British Bulldogs partner. "I'm ready to come back with more matches, but for now, what I need is a good night's sleep. It's bloody hard taking more than a year off and then wrestling in two grueling matches!" □

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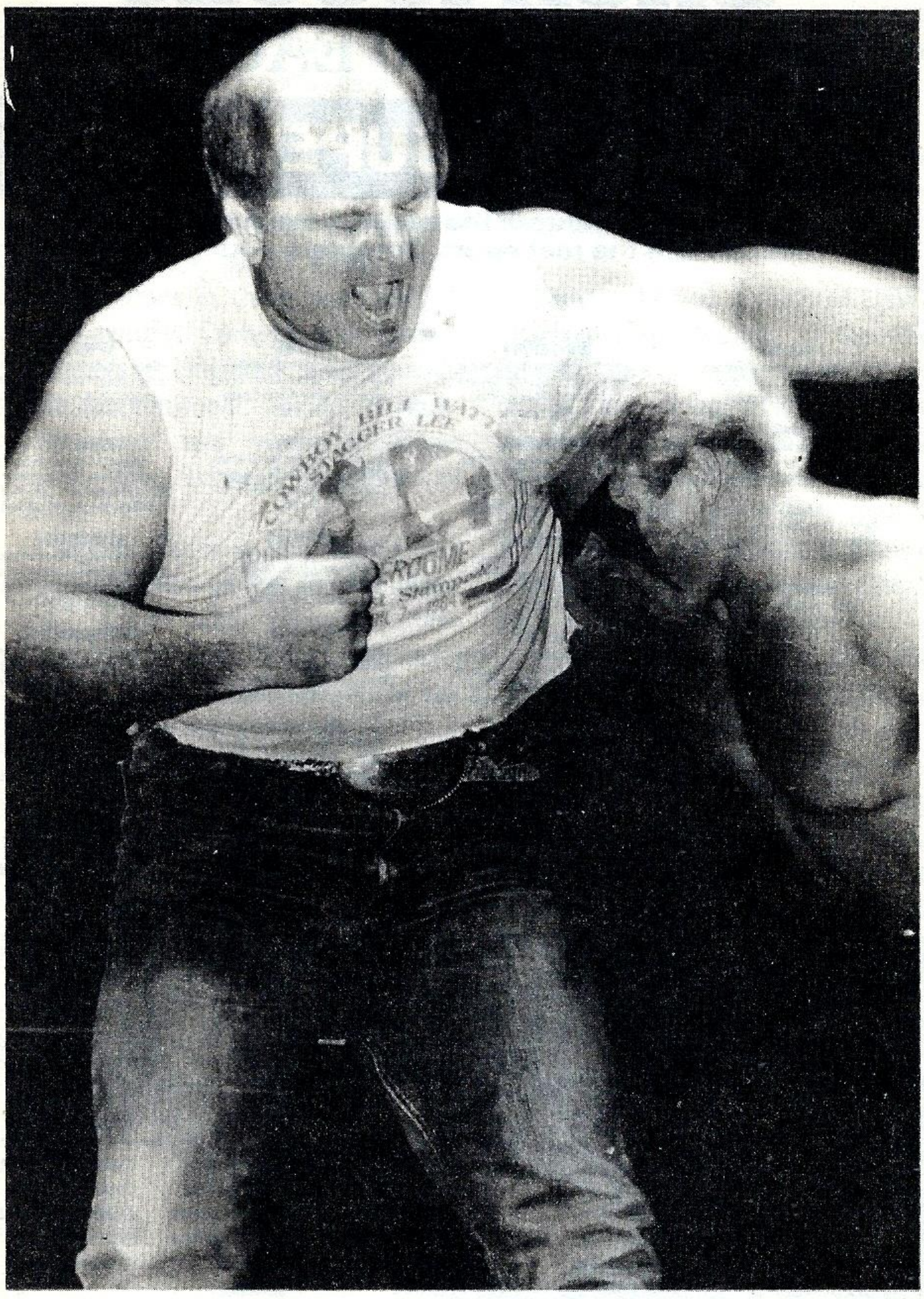
DREAM MATCH

(Continued from page 16)



Watts has never refrained from showing his toughness in the ring. But when all hell broke loose at the WOW induction dinner, he was the only one not to enter the fray.

cious and humble as his father. Something had bothered Dustin for many years now, and as he introduced Erik Watts, that hostility, to the growing horror of the audience—and the mounting anger of Erik and Bill Watts—poured out from him.

"I remember when my rookie campaign ended," he said, "and it was time for all the year-end awards to be given out. A lot of people thought I deserved to be Rookie of the Year, but I guess a lot of people took it out on me the fact that my dad jumped federations to the WWF."

Looks of disbelief registered on the faces in the room. It was inappropriate to rehash old "business" during these nights. Bill Watts' nerve endings tingled, and Erik, who was standing up waiting for Dustin to finish, clenched his fists.

"Perhaps if my father had some more pull," Dustin continued, "then I might have gotten the awards this young man captured this year." Then, with a nod to Bill, Dustin said, "We all know it pays to have relatives in high places, but I guess some places are higher than others, eh?"

It was more than Erik could stand. He told a friend later from his hospital bed, "For this dork to say this after the years I've spent not getting anything from my father was too much. I couldn't take it."

Erik grabbed the microphone from Dustin and said, "I don't know why Dustin is crying about awards. At the rate he's going, Dustin is a lock for the Most Improved Wrestler for the next 10 years. Unless, of course, his father keeps teaching him. Then he'll win it for the next 20 years."

"It's one thing to make fun of me," Dustin told Kendall later from his hospital bed, "but leave my father alone."

Dustin took the plaque he was about to award Erik and instead smashed it over young Watts' head. Reflexively, Watts threw a bowl of hot soup in Dustin's face. The two became locked in mortal combat, resembling, in their tuxedos, a pair of rabid penguins as they rolled off the dais, over a film projector, and behind a curtain, where they clawed and punched each other until a dozen wrestlers would separate them.

During the battle, Bill Watts stared at Dusty Rhodes and remained in his seat. Dusty returned his icy stare, but immediately leapt into the fray to help his son. Both boys suffered concussions.

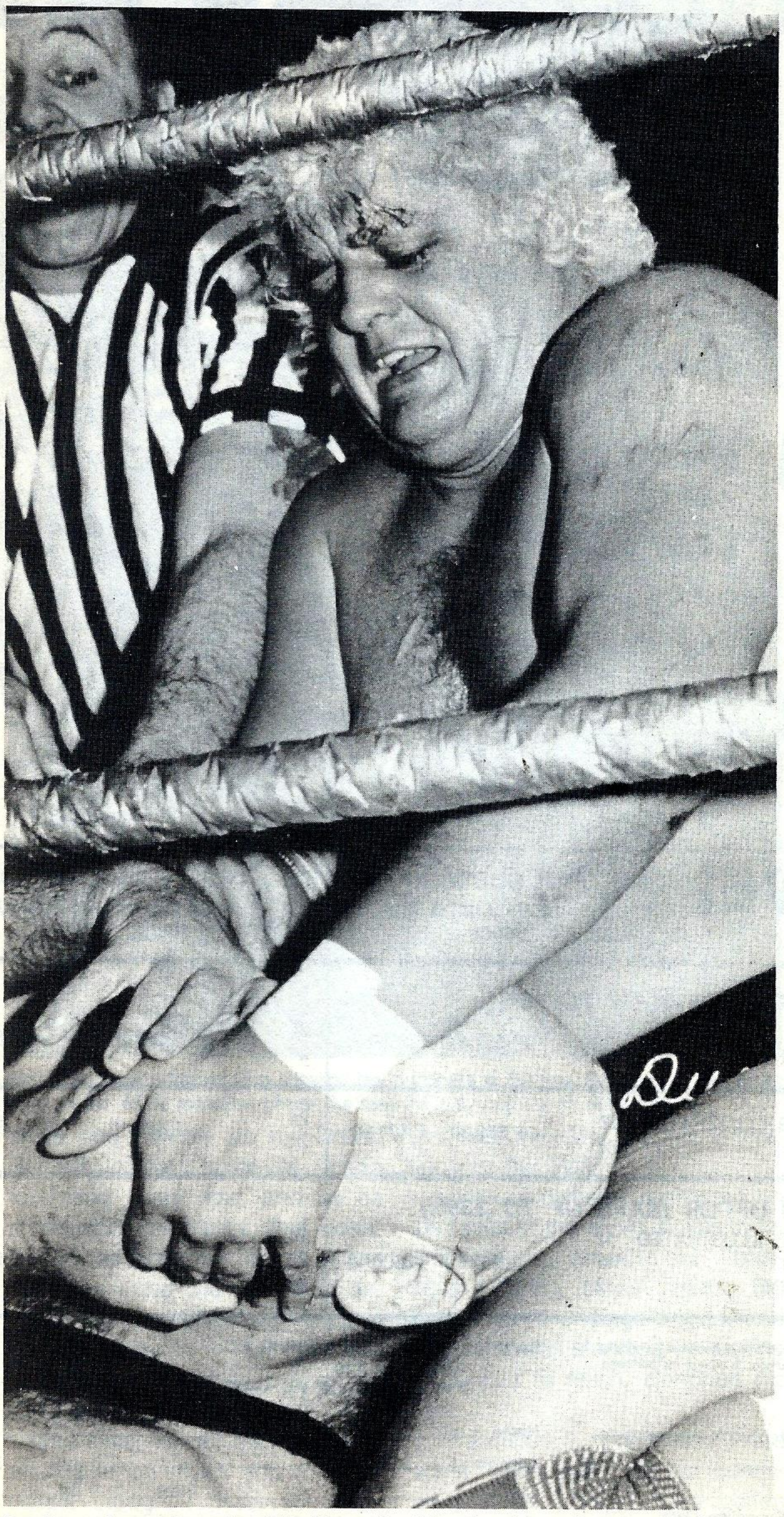
KIDS AT WAR

Bill Watts did not want to sanction the match, but if he could resist pressure from his son, he could not ignore the order from his boss.

(Continued on page 58)

DREAM MATCH

(Continued on page 56)



For his son's match against Erik Watts, the "American Dream" preferred a hands-on approach, stationing himself at ringside. It wasn't long before he was very much involved.

"The fans heard about the fight," WCW owner Ted Turner said. "I know you'd prefer to let this thing die, but you must give the people what they want. Besides, your son wants it badly, too. He's the Rookie of the Year. He has clout. Let them wrestle."

The match between Erik Watts and Dustin Rhodes made nervous wrecks of both fathers. Dusty Rhodes and Bill Watts had tremendous respect for each other as competitors, though as fathers, they thought each other were very lacking.

"The kid follows Dusty around like a calf does its mother," Bill complained to his wife.

Dusty couldn't believe that Bill Watts elected to sit in a luxury box high atop the arena, rather than at ringside for the match.

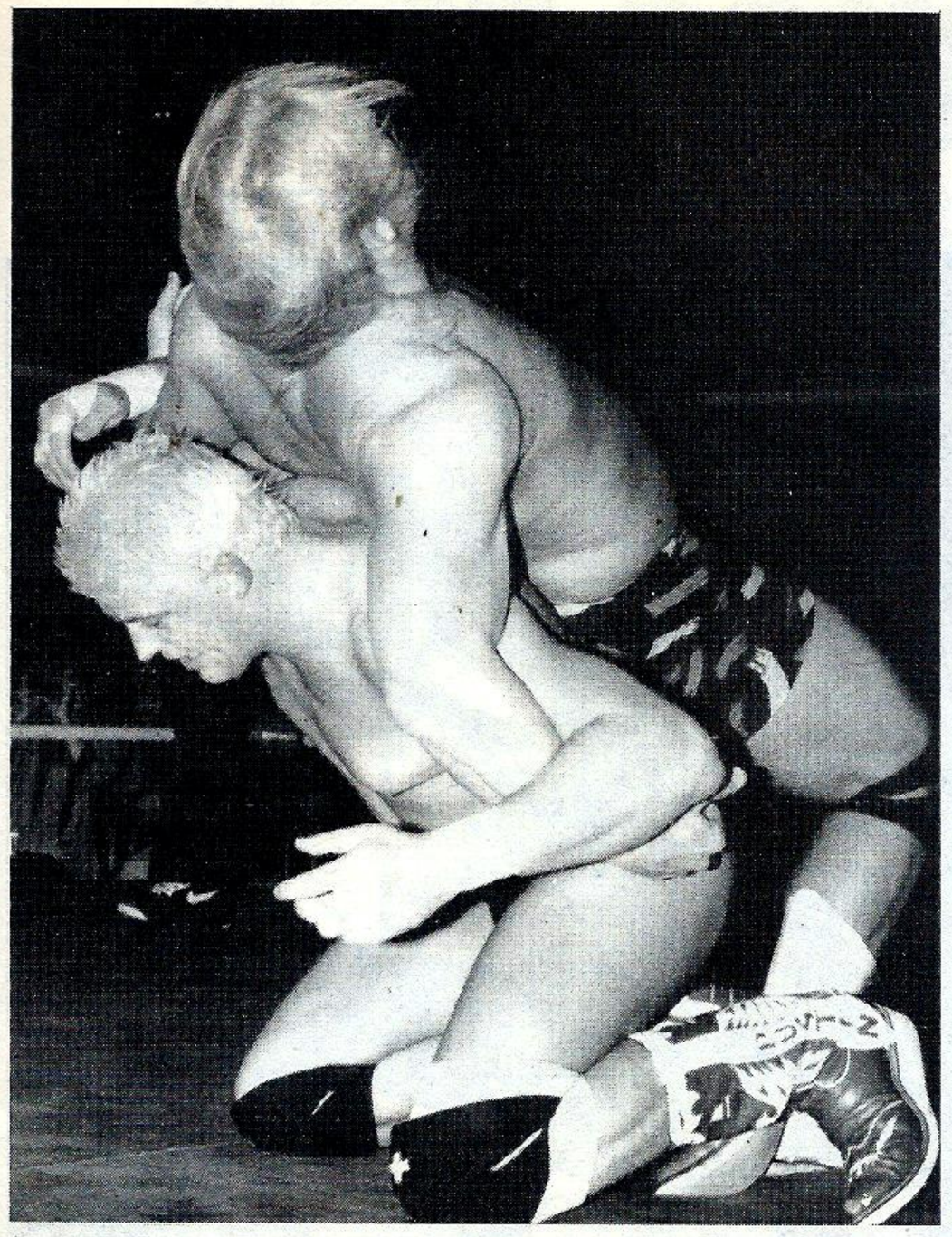
"The man has no heart," Dusty told his son. "You get in there and show Bill Watts how a Rhodes takes care of business."

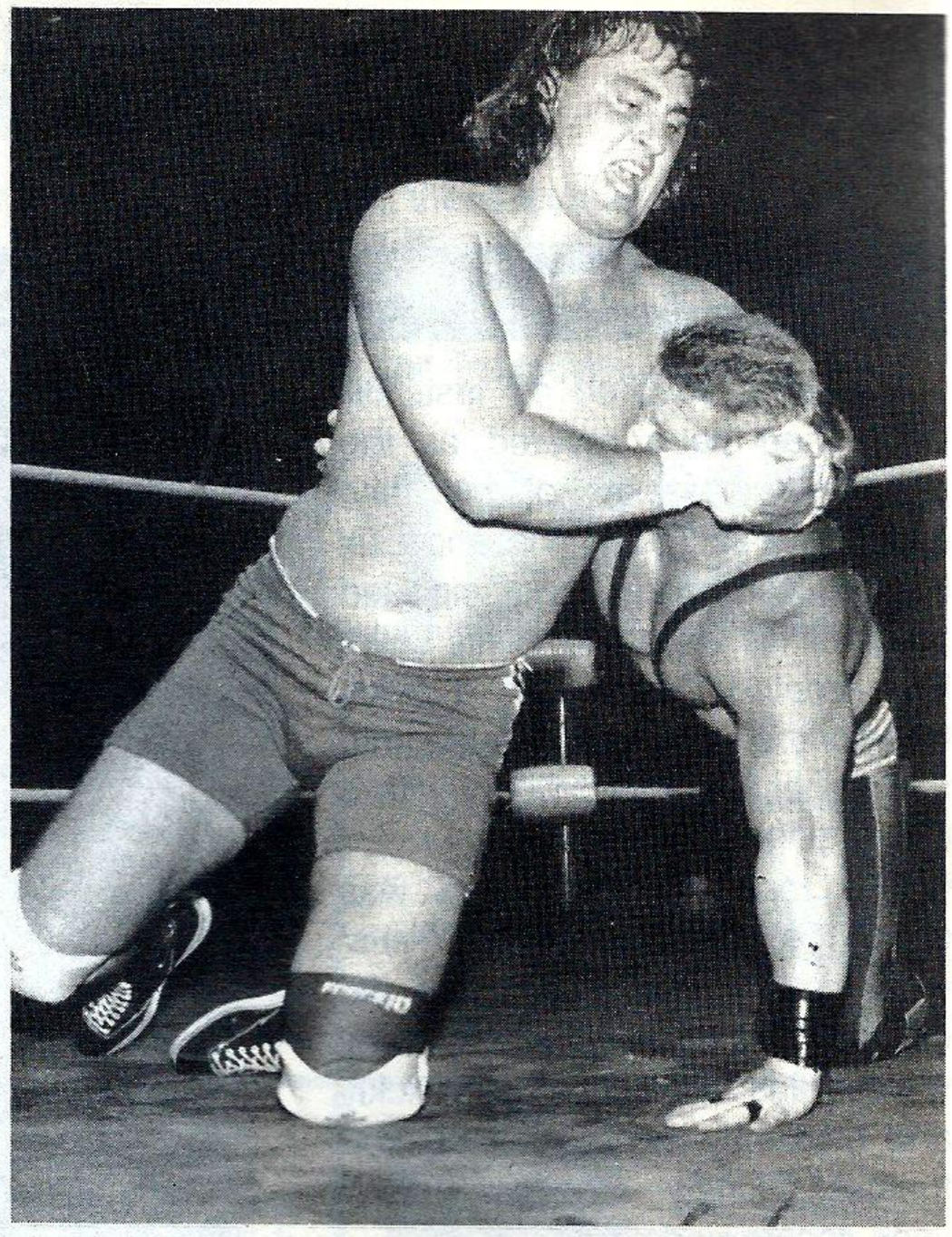
Though tempers were short, the match was a showcase of scientific talent. They traded the advantage for the first 20 minutes. Dusty exhorted his son from ringside, while Bill Watts did the same from his skybox.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

At the 21-minute mark, Turner called Bill Watts, who turned his back to the match to answer the phone. "I told you there was nothing to worry about," the mogul said. "They'll get this out of their system, shake hands, and live happily ever after."

In the ring at that moment, Dustin surprised Erik with a roundhouse kick that sent him flying over the ropes toward Dusty. Decades of experience allowed Dusty to realize the angle in





Dustin Rhodes (left) and Erik Watts (right) are two youngsters who have worked hard to improve their technical skills. But when their families feuded, science gave way to pure brawling.

which Erik would land would snap his leg in two. He raced over to break his fall just as Bill Watts turned his attention back toward the ring.

What Bill saw was Dusty Rhodes grabbing his son, scooping him up and then pushing him back into the ring. He did not know that Dusty's split-second jump saved Erik's leg from a certain fracture. He knew this: *I have to get down there and help my son.* An express elevator rushed Watts to ringside, where he wasted little time in jumping Dusty. The attack took Dusty by surprise. Watts smashed Dusty's head into a row of chairs and kicked him in the head. "You bum!" Watts screamed. "You keep your fat, filthy hands off my kid!"

From the ring, Erik nearly fainted in watching his father's reaction. When Dusty regained his balance and launched a counter-attack, Erik jumped to his father's aid, followed, of course, by Dustin, who joined his own father. The crowd went berserk as Dusty and Dustin and Erik and Bill flung each other in and around the ring. The referees couldn't stop them. Wrestlers pouring in from the dressing room couldn't stop them. As far as Turner could tell, there was only one solution to this whole mess: Let the fathers and sons battle it out in an unprecedented tag team match.

WATTS VS. RHODES

The odds heavily favored Dusty and Dustin, who had spent a lifetime working out together. But what the Watts' lacked in time, they compensated for in intensity. "I've wanted to do this my whole life," confessed Bill, as he and Erik sparred for the first time, "but I didn't think I should. I'm sorry, son."

Erik would have replied were he not so busy holding back his tears. *(Continued on page 60)*

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DREAM MATCH

(Continued from page 59)

THE MATCH

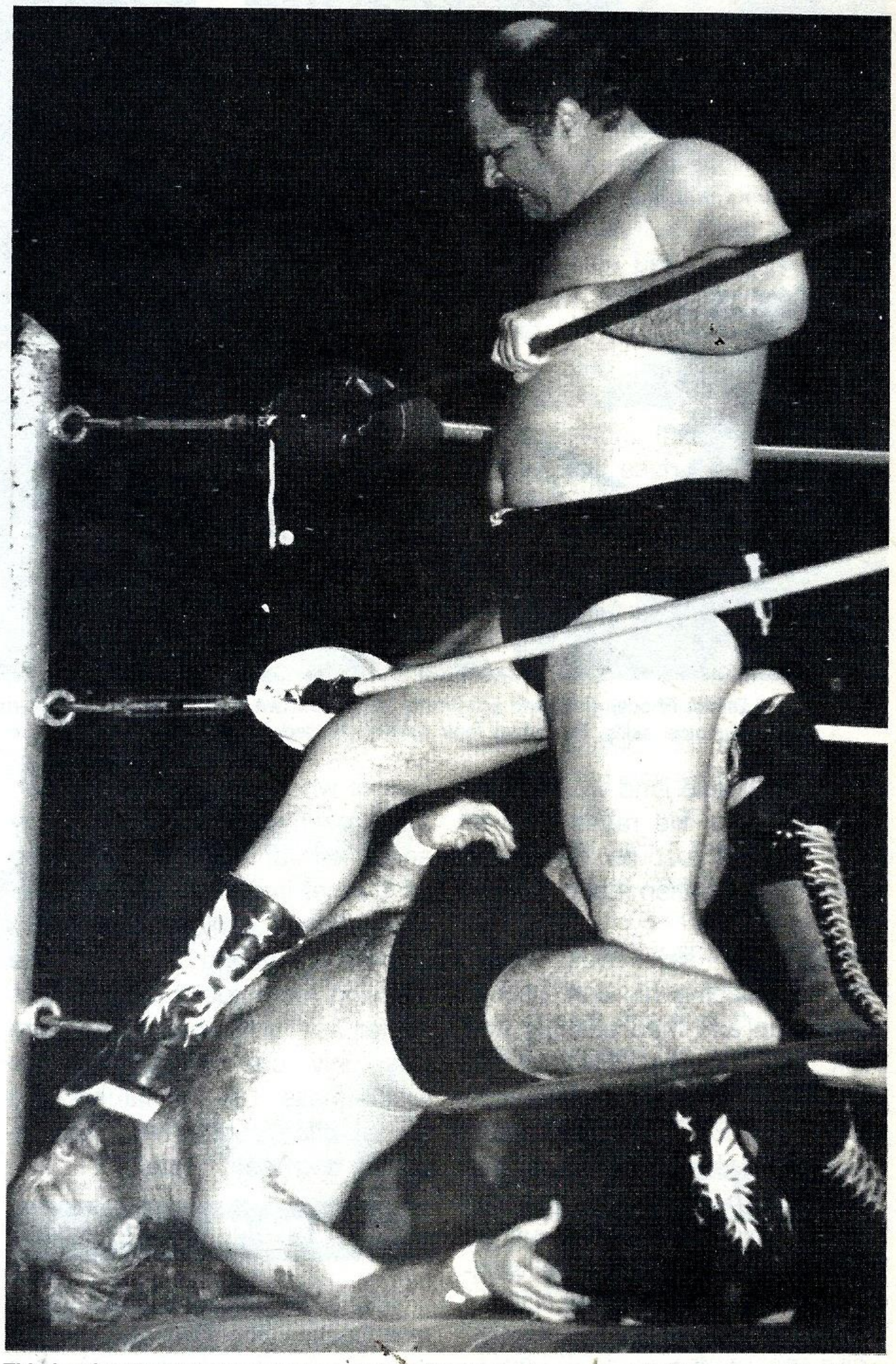
The sons squared off first. Bill Watts had been revered as the premier rulebreaker of his day, and in the short time he and Erik trained together had imparted some of his expertise to his child. Erik greeted Dustin with a quick kick to the groin, then leapt into the corner and felled Dusty with a pulverizing elbowsmash.

The tone of the match was clearly established: The Watts' were here under duress and did not intend to make friends. They wanted this match over as quickly and efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, Dusty Rhodes wasn't very accommodating.

Rhodes picked himself up, spit out a chipped tooth, and leapt into the ring. He grabbed Erik in a headlock and signaled Dustin, who readied his size-12 boot. "Think you're cute, boy?" Dusty muttered under his breath. "I'll show you cute." He ran the rookie's head into Dustin's boot bottom. Erik collapsed to the canvas, motionless, while blood from a deep gash pooled around his head.

It had been years since Bill Watts felt anything like this kind of adrenaline, what he used to call the "delicious anxiety," that occurred the moment before he knew his big fists were going to meet someone's face. As he watched his son bleeding, a jolt of delicious anxiety raced up his spine. He jumped into the ring, picked Dustin Rhodes off the canvas, and hurled him into the first row of spectators. Then, he and Dusty, the two dinosaurs, squared off.

The crowd rose to its feet. Colleagues like Bruno Sammartino, Killer Kowalski, Dory Funk Jr., and Baron Mikel Scicluna shouted encouragement from their seats.



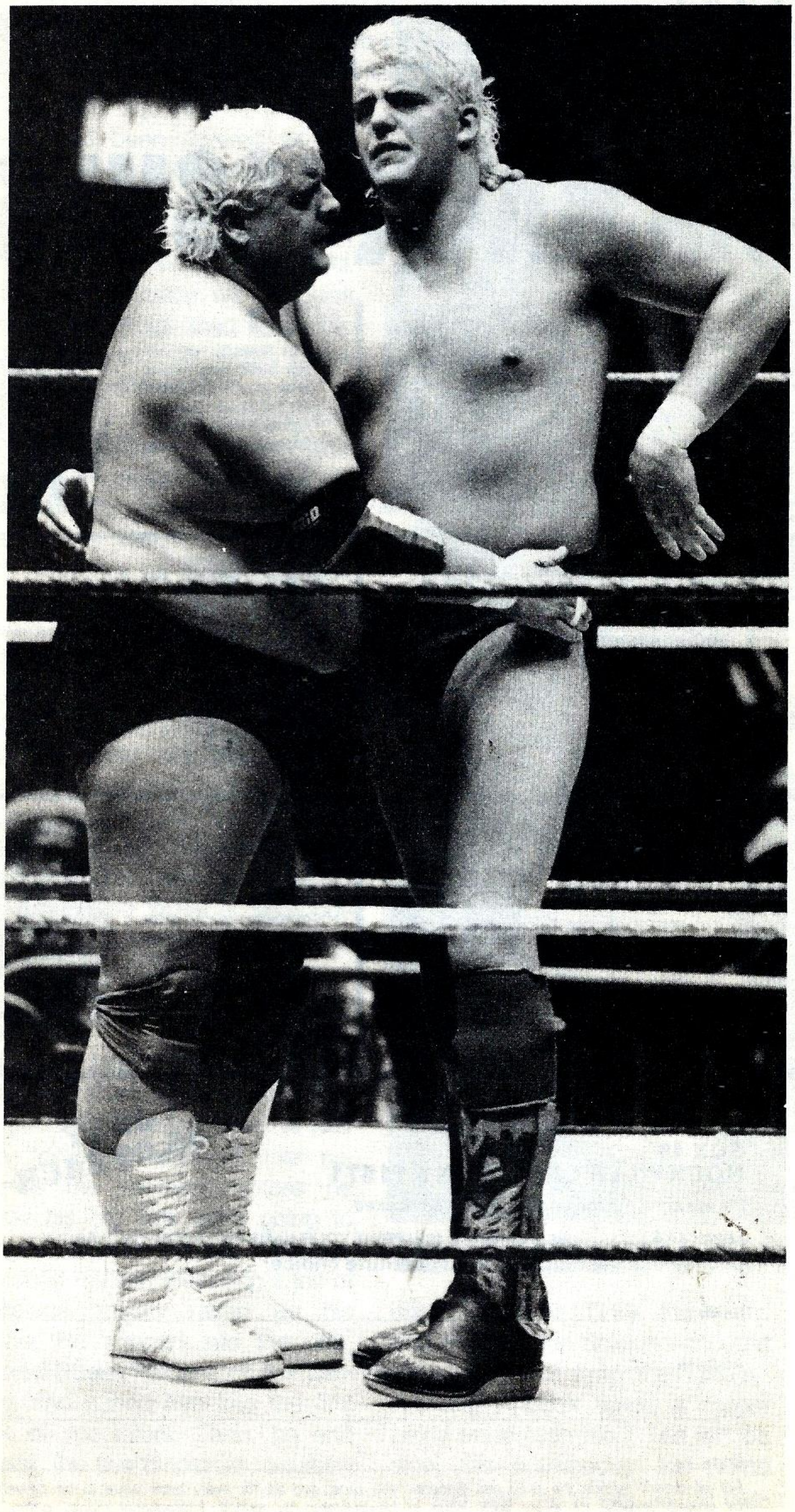
This is what immediately follows a feeling Bill Watts refers to as "delicious anxiety." The "Cowboy" thoroughly relishes the moment right before destroying an opponent.

Dusty Rhodes spent a career being underestimated. Too fat, too slow, too outrageous, too dumb . . . too bad, he'd say, as he captured three NWA World championships and too many other title belts to count. He had no real quarrel with the man in front of him (who technically was his boss), but he had raised his child to wrestle as he had: Treat your opponent like your mortal enemy, attack as if your very life depended upon it.

(Continued on page 62)

DREAM MATCH

(Continued from page 62)



Dusty Rhodes may have appeared overweight, but he sent Bill Watts over the top rope. Dustin, meanwhile, was locked in a bloody battle with Erik Watts.

Dusty, a solid 40 pounds over his wrestling weight, dropkicked Bill Watts out of the ring. The crowd fell silent, then rose to their feet in wild applause. Watts, more stunned than injured, regained his composure and slid back into the ring. He was a big man who had not lost an ounce of his prodigious strength. He picked Dusty off the canvas and suplexed him through the ropes.

Meanwhile, the children were busy rearranging each other's faces. There would be no repeat of the previous scientific encounter. They were fighting now for family honor and nothing—not titles, money, nor glory—mattered more.

The first break came at the 32-minute mark. Bill and Erik set Dustin up for a double-bodypress, Erik off the top rope, while Bill hurled himself off the ring ropes. However, their timing was off, and they landed on each other instead, leaving both on the canvas near unconsciousness. Dusty quickly mounted the turnbuckle and dove at Erik, who, at the last second, moved out of the way, leaving Dusty in a sprawling heap on the mat.

Dustin rolled onto Bill, while Erik crawled atop Dusty. The referee counted both men out, but started with Bill first. Neither father could get up, and Dustin and Dusty were declared the winners by a half a second.

AFTERMATH

In the postmatch press conference, Bill Watts congratulated Dusty and Dustin on their victory, and then informed the media of Dusty's new job as "wrestling ambassador to Yugoslavia." Everyone laughed. □

WRESTLING SUPERSTARS

TOP 10

1 BIG VAN VADER
404, Denver, CO
(-) WCW World champion

2 BRET HART
235, Calgary, Alberta
(2) WWF World champion

3 SHAWN MICHAELS
220, San Antonio, TX
(4) WWF Intercontinental champion

4 YOKOZUNA
505, Samoa
(-) No. 2 contender: WWF title

5 STING
260, Venice Beach, CA
(9) No. 1 contender: WCW title

6 JERRY LAWLER
234, Memphis, TN
(-) USWA champion

7 TONY ANTHONY
235, Bucksnort, TN
(7) Smoky Mountain champion

8 BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
230, Memphis, TN
(-) USWA Southern champion

9 RAZOR RAMON
291, Minneapolis, MN
(-) No. 3 contender: WWF title

10 DUSTIN RHODES
254, Austin, TX
(-) WCW U.S. champion

The Rock 'n' Roll Express

TAG TEAMS

1 RICK STEAMBOAT & SHANE DOUGLAS
Combined weight: 461 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions

2 MONEY INC.
Combined weight: 492 pounds
(2) WWF World tag team champions

3 THE NASTY BOYS
Combined weight: 478 pounds
(7) No. 1 contenders: WWF tag title

4 STEVE AUSTIN & BRIAN PILLMAN
Combined weight: 467 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WCW tag title

5 THE HEADSHRINKERS
Combined weight: 520 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF tag title

6 THE ROCK 'N' ROLL EXPRESS
Combined weight: 453 pounds
(8) Smoky Mountain tag team champions

7 THE MOONDOGS
Combined weight: 634 pounds
(5) USWA tag team champions

8 SHANGHAI PIERCE & TEX SLAZENGER
Combined weight: 599 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WCW tag title

9 RON & DON HARRIS
Combined weight: 585 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: USWA tag title

10 JOHN HAWK & BOBBY DUNCUM JR.
Combined weight: 557 pounds
(-) Global tag team champions

WCW

World Champion:
BIG VAN VADER
(4) 404, Denver, CO

1—STING
(3) 260, Venice Beach, CA

2—DUSTIN RHODES
(-) 254, Austin, TX

3—RON SIMMONS
(C) 260, Warner Robins, GA

4—BARRY WINDHAM
(-) 263, Sweetwater, TX

5—ERIK WATTS
(-) 262, Oklahoma City, OK

6—2 COLD SCORPIO
(-) 222, Denver, CO

7—RICK STEAMBOAT
(5) 238, Honolulu, HI

8—PAUL ORNDORFF
(-) 253, Brandon, FL

9—CACTUS JACK
(-) 304, Truth or Cons., NM

10—JOHNNY B. BADD
(-) 259, Macon, GA

WWF

World Champion:
BRET HART
(C) 235, Calgary, Alberta

1—SHAWN MICHAELS
(1) 220, San Antonio, TX

2—YOKOZUNA
(-) 505, Samoa

3—RAZOR RAMON
(3) 291, Minneapolis, MN

4—THE UNDERTAKER
(-) 320, parts unknown

5—CURT HENNIG
(-) 235, Minneapolis, MN

6—BOB BACKLUND
(-) 242, Princeton, MN

7—BAM BAM BIGELOW
(-) 369, Mt. Laurel, NJ

8—TATANKA
(10) 260, Miami, FL

9—RIC FLAIR
(-) 243, Minneapolis, MN

10—MARTY JANNETTY
(-) 230, Columbia, GA

GLOBAL

North American Champion:
ROD PRICE
(C) 265, Los Angeles, CA

1—MANNY VILLALOBOS
(-) 248, Dallas, TX

2—KERRY VON ERICH
(-) 260, Denton, TX

3—BLACK BART
(-) 261, Pampa, TX

4—SUPER DESTROYER
(-) 256, parts unknown

5—BOOKER T
(-) 266, Dallas, TX

6—STEVE SIMPSON
(7) 230, Johannesburg, SA

7—STEVEN DANE
(-) 232, Dallas, TX

8—KILLER BROOKS
(5) 284, Waxahachie, TX

9—TERRY SIMMS
(-) 226, San Francisco, CA

10—MIKE DAVIS
(1) 243, Tampa, FL

USWA

USWA Champion:
JERRY LAWLER
(2) 234, Memphis, TN

1—BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
(1) 230, Memphis, TN

2—JEFF JARRETT
(3) 220, Hendersonville, TN

3—MIKE MILLER
(-) 265, New Orleans, LA

4—DAN DAVIS
(4) 238, Nashville, TN

5—BILL DUNDEE
(9) 214, Melbourne, Australia

6—TONY DeNUCCI
(-) 230, Minneapolis, MN

7—JEFF GAYLORD
(6) 288, St. Louis, MO

8—MASTER OF TERROR II
(-) 235, parts unknown

9—RON HARRIS
(-) 277, Portland, OR

10—BERT PRENTICE
(-) 344, Dallas, TX

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. Most Popular and Most Hated ratings are based on nationwide telephone and arena surveys of wrestling fans and on the volume and character of mail that comes to our offices. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue, while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

MOST POPULAR

1 BRET HART
235, Calgary, Alberta
Last issue: No. 4 Most Popular

2 STING
260, Venice Beach, CA
Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular

3 THE UNDERTAKER
320, Dallas, TX
Last issue: No. 5 Most Popular

4 DUSTIN RHODES
254, Austin, TX
Last issue: unrated

5 RON SIMMONS
260, Warner Robins, GA
Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular

6 CURT HENNIG
235, Minneapolis, MN
Last issue: unrated

7 RICK STEAMBOAT
238, Honolulu, HI
Last issue: No. 10 Most Popular

8 RANDY SAVAGE
245, Sarasota, FL
Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular

9 CRUSH
310, Honolulu, HI
Last issue: unrated

10 BOB BACKLUND
242, Princeton, MN
Last issue: unrated

MOST HATED

1 BARRY WINDHAM
263, Sweetwater, TX
Last issue: unrated

2 RAZOR RAMON
290, Minneapolis, MN
Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated

3 RIC FLAIR
243, Minneapolis, MN
Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated

4 SHAWN MICHAELS
220, San Antonio, TX
Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated

5 BIG VAN VADER
404, Denver, CO
Last issue: unrated

6 BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
220, Memphis, TN
Last issue: unrated

7 BRIAN PILLMAN
226, Cincinnati, OH
Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated

8 TONY ANTHONY
235, Bucksnort, TN
Last issue: No. 10 Most Hated

9 ROD PRICE
265, Los Angeles, CA
Last issue: unrated

10 YOKOZUNA
505, Samoa
Last issue: unrated

For period ended January 13, 1993

CUMULATIVE RATINGS

These ratings are based on the past five issues of this magazine. We have examined our ratings for each of those issues—in our Top 10 and Tag Team categories only—and assigned each position a point value: 10 points for a number-one rating, nine for a number-two ranking, and so on down to one point for a number-10 rating. The point values for all wrestlers in the past five issues have been compiled, allowing a maximum of 50 points. Each issue we'll present the top five finishers in each category. While our regular ratings reflect the past month, these cumulative ratings give an indication of wider trends in the sport.

SINGLES

1—BRET HART ..... 32 points
1—RICK RUDE ..... 32 points
3—RON SIMMONS ..... 29 points
5—RANDY SAVAGE ..... 19 points
5—STING ..... 19 points

TAG TEAMS

1—IRS & DiBIASE ..... 37 points
2—NATURAL DISASTERS ..... 33 points
3—TERRY GORDY & STEVE WILLIAMS ..... 28 points
4—RICK & SCOTT STEINER ..... 25 points
5—NASTY BOYS ..... 19 points

SMOKY MOUNTAIN

Smoky Mountain Champion:
TONY ANTHONY
(C) 235, Bucksnort, TN

1—TIM HORNER
(1) 235, Morristown, TN

2—BRIAN LEE
(2) 251, Los Angeles, CA

3—KEVIN SULLIVAN
(-) 252, Boston, MA

4—JIMMY GOLDEN
(-) 255, Montgomery, AL

5—RENO RIGGINS
(-) 228, Los Vegas, NV

6—TRACEY SMOTHERS
(-) 227, Atlanta, GA

7—MONGOLIAN STOMPER
(-) 239, Mongolia

8—DIXIE DYNOMITE
(3) 225, parts unknown

9—ROBERT FULLER
(-) 257, Dyresburg, TN

10—DUTCH MANTEL
(9) 224, Oil Trough, TX

IWCCW

IWCCW Champion:
TITLE VACANT
To be determined in tourney

1—JOE SAVOLDI
(1) 220, Parsippany, NJ

2—JIMMY DEO
(2) 301, Blandon, PA

3—WHITE CLOUD
(9) 240, Phoenix, AZ

4—DANCING WOLF
(5) 235, Phoenix, AZ

5—ROCKY JONES
(3) 236, New York, NY

6—JOHNNY WILDSIDE
(6) 285, parts unknown

7—FLEX LAVENDER
(4) 225, Bloomfield, NJ

8—JOHNNY ROTTEN
(7) 256, Lake Charles, LA

9—THE COMMANDO
(10) 239, parts unknown

10—THE EXECUTIONER
(8) 277, parts unknown

ECW: **ECW champion**—The Sandman; **1**—Rockin' Rebel; **2**—Max Thrasher; **3**—Tommy Cairo; **4**—Glenn Osbourne; **5**—Jimmy Snuka; **6**—Tony Stetson; **7**—J.T. Smith; **8**—Larry Winters; **9**—Chris Michaels; **10**—The Samoan Warrior.

IWA: **IWA champion**—Vladimir Koloff; **1**—Thunderfoot II; **2**—Stan Lane; **3**—Preston Steele; **4**—Tracey Smothers; **5**—Ivan Koloff; **6**—Tommy Rogers; **7**—Colt Steele; **8**—The Big Cheese; **9**—Scott Summers; **10**—Cousin Junior.

IWF: **IWF champion**—title vacant; **1**—Hercules Hernandez; **2**—The Possessor; **3**—Chubby M.C.; **4**—Greg Valentine; **5**—Cliff Anderson; **6**—Rob Van Dam; **7**—Chris Proctor; **8**—Kendall Windham; **9**—Nuclear Assassin I; **10**—Billy Brooks.

PWA: **PWA champion**—The Hater; **1**—Charlie Norris; **2**—Brad Rheingans; **3**—Lightning Kid; **5**—The Punisher; **5**—Randy Gusto; **6**—Tommy Ferrara; **7**—Steve Berg; **8**—Derrick Dukes; **9**—Larry Cameron; **10**—Billy Blaze.

PWF: **PWF champion**—Italian Stallion; **1**—George South; **2**—Flaming Youth; **3**—Cruel Connection II; **4**—Star Ryder; **5**—Scotty McKeever; **6**—Austin Steele; **7**—Gentleman James; **8**—Gladiator II; **9**—Russian Assassin; **10**—Killdozer.

USA: **Championship Wrestling USA TV champion**—Bart Sawyer; **1**—C.W. Bergstrom; **2**—Michelle Starr; **3**—John Rambo; **4**—Col. DeBeers; **5**—Al Madril; **6**—Billy Two Eagles; **7**—Timothy Flowers; **8**—Mike Winner; **9**—Buddy Wayne; **10**—Karl Pope.

WIN: **WIN champion**—A.C. Golden; **1**—The Sandman; **2**—A.J. Fritzoid; **3**—Chris Candido; **4**—Cheetah Kid; **5**—The Spider; **6**—Pain; **7**—King Kaluha; **8**—Sledgehammer McGill; **9**—Ricky Blues; **10**—Lightning Kid.

WWC: **WWC Universal champion**—Carlos Colon; **1**—Invader I; **2**—Dick Murdoch; **3**—The Equalizer; **4**—Rex King; **5**—Mohammad Hussein; **6**—Ray Gonzalez; **7**—El Vigilante; **8**—Victor Jovica; **9**—Solid Gold 14 Karat; **10**—El Vikingo.

RATINGS ANALYSIS

This column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 20 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

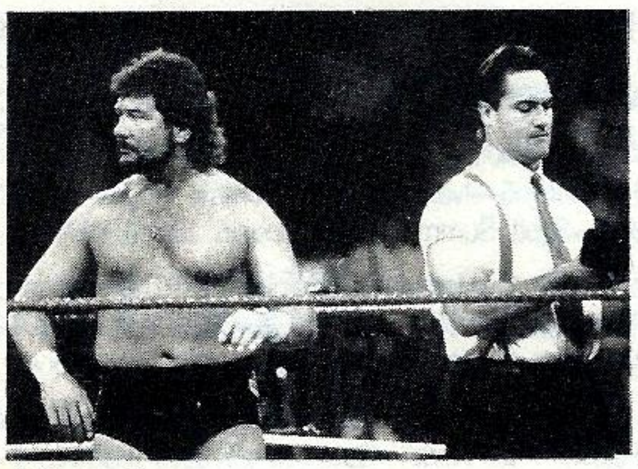
Time to sound off! As we do from time to time, we solicit reader response, and now is your chance to get involved with "Ratings Analysis."

We're looking for *your* top 10 ratings in any category you may choose. For instance, the *PWI Hotline* recently queried fans about who they believed were the ugliest grapplers in the sport. We used that information to come up with an unofficial ranking of the homeliest stars in the mat world. The winner, predictably, was veteran **Andre the Giant**, a selection that no doubt pleased columnist **Eddie Ellner**.

We're sure there are other top 10 categories you'd like to come up with. Send us your responses today, and those that we consider the best will be printed in upcoming issues.

***

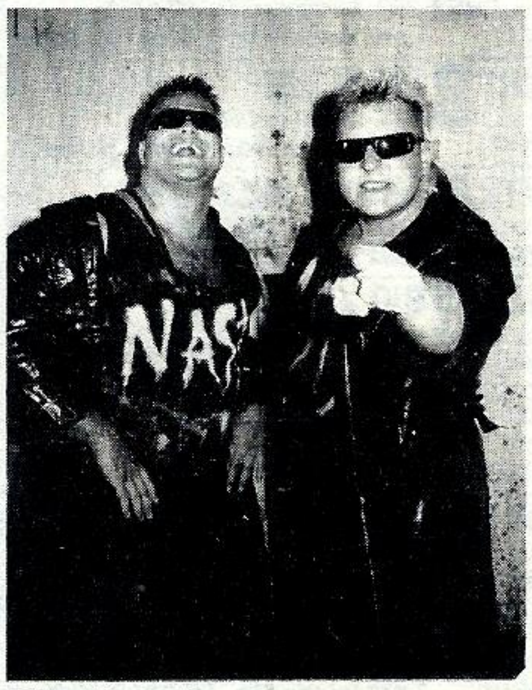
WWF dilemma. It's a rare situation when you have world champions who could never be rated number one, but that's exactly what's happening at this point in mat history. That's because **Irwin R. Schyster** and **Ted DiBiase**, known collectively as **Money Inc.**, have regained the WWF World tag team title.



Money Inc.

Schyster, DiBiase, and their manager, **Jimmy Hart**, are up to the same kind of chicanery that marred their first championship reign. Time after time, in match after match, Schyster and DiBiase fail to defend their title in a fashion befitting champions. When the going gets tough, DiBiase and Schyster usually flee the ring and deliberately get counted out. It's an act of blatant cowardice that allows them to keep their title while getting out of the dirty work of actually defending their championship.

DiBiase and Schyster are the worst tag team champions in WWF history, wrote angry Harold Blankston of Bella Vista, California. *The same thing they used to do against* ***The Natural Disasters****, they're now doing against* ***The Nasty Boys****. I've seen Money Inc. defend their title twice, and both times they just got up and walked out of the ring, which gives their opponents the victory but allows them to get away with keeping their title. Can't WWF President* ***Jack Tunney*** *see through this scam and strip DiBiase and Schyster of a title they don't deserve to hold?*

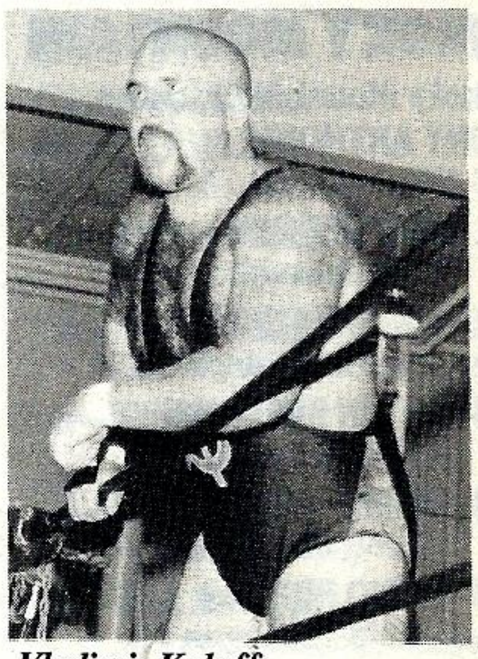


The Nasty Boys

We agree with those sentiments, Harold, but that's a decision that can only be made by Tunney. In fact, **Brian Knobs** and **Jerry Sags** have defeated DiBiase and Schyster by countout so many times, they're on the verge being ranked *ahead* of the tag team champions! **Shane Douglas** and **Rick Steamboat**, the WCW World tag team champions, need never worry about being ranked any lower than number one with ineffective titleholders such as DiBiase and Schyster around!

***

Welcome back, IWA! Effective with this issue, we're pleased to announce that the International Wrestling Association has returned to our agate ratings section. The IWA fell into promotional doldrums for several months, but has responded by offering fans throughout the country a schedule of talent-laced cards that will take place during the next few months. Still reigning as IWA heavyweight champion is young **Vladimir Koloff**, the nephew of former WWF World champion **Ivan Koloff** and cousin of WCW star **Nikita Koloff**. Popular **Preston Steele** holds the IWA's U.S. championship.



Vladimir Koloff

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See ya! Care to contribute a top 10 list? Want to complain about Money Inc.? Send your mail to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o *Wrestling Superstars,* Box 48, Rockville Centre, NY 11571. □

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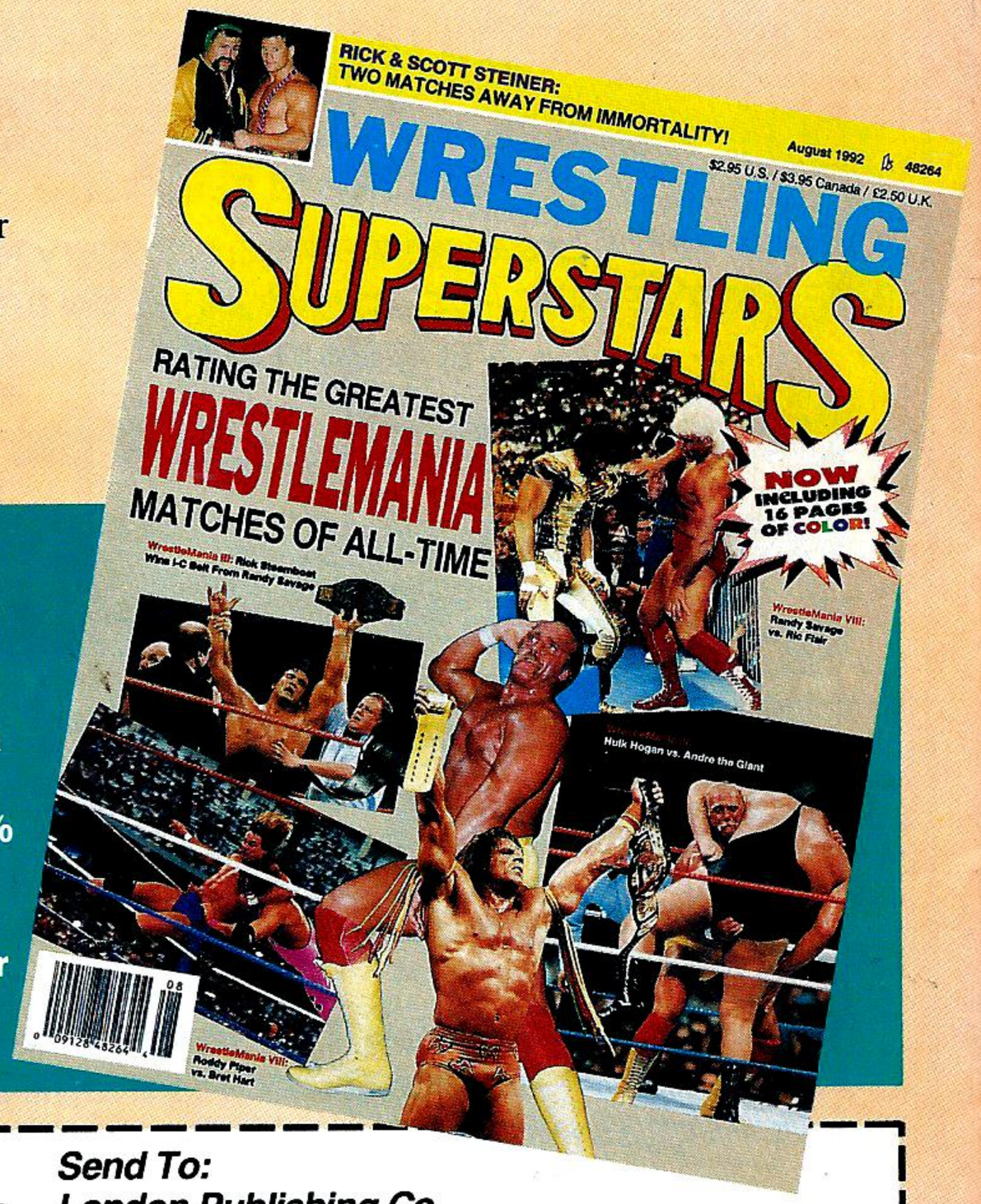

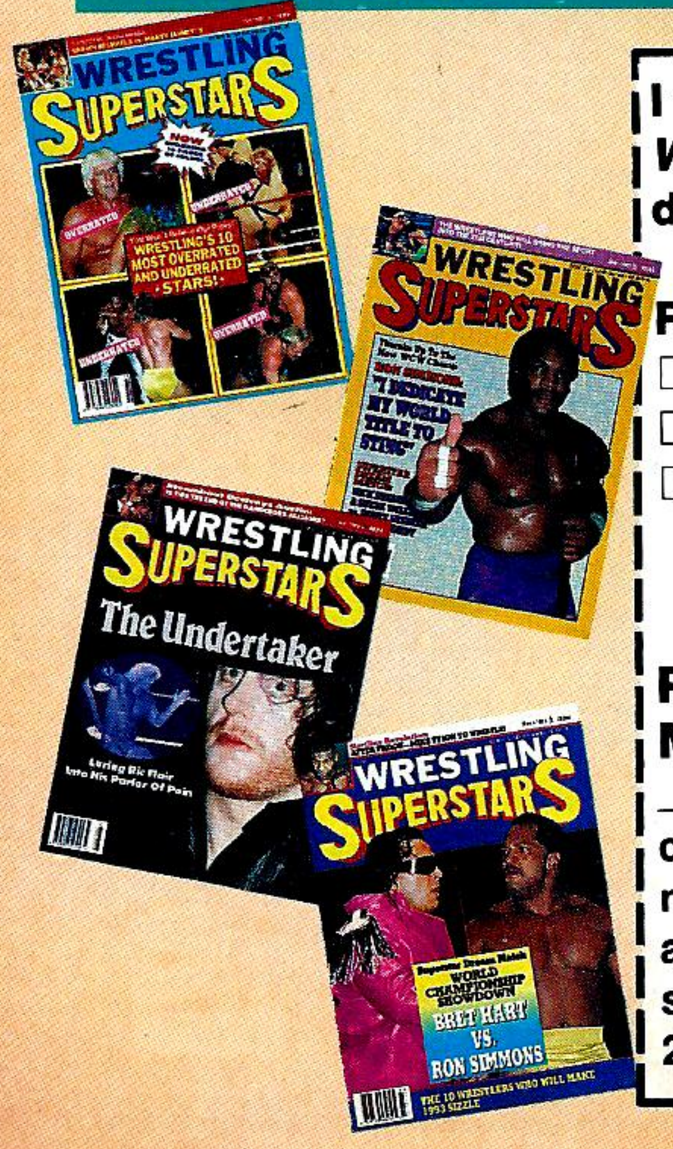

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